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CARNY-VORE

Developer adds Astroland to his Coney Island kingdom

Historic park to shut down after 2007

By Ariella Cohen
The Brooklyn Papers

Coney Island's Astroland amusement park was sold this week to a real-estate developer who plans to tear down the family-run carnival to make way for a \$1.5-billion fantasy-land of hotels, movie theaters, neon-lit shops, beachfront luxury condos and even a few new rides.

The Albert family operated Astroland for 44 years before selling the land to developer Joe Sitt's Thor Equities for an undisclosed sum.

Sitt plans to use the two-acre site for a hotel and other attractions, including a 150-foot water slide, a multi-level carousel and the city's first new roller coaster since the Cyclone was built in 1927.

The Cyclone itself, which is owned by the Parks Department but run by the Albert family, was not part of this week's sale.

Deno's Wonder Wheel Park was also not included in the sale. That park is the biggest of the remaining funlands in Coney Island, but it sits right between land already owned by Thor Equities and the Astroland site bought this week.



CONEY ISLAND'S ROLLER COASTER HISTORY

PAGE 14

Many believe that Deno's is next on Sitt's "to buy" list. Sitt has spent a reported \$100 million acquiring land throughout the once-vibrant "people's playground" of Coney Island — an area he now wants to turn into a mini-Las Vegas.

"We want jaws to drop," said the developer's spokesman, Lee Silberstein.

"This is going to be the largest expansion of the amusement district that Coney has ever seen. There will be jobs, restaurants at every price point, all

kinds of retail, the water park, a hotel where people could hold trade shows."

The project earned praise from the official "un-official mayor" of Coney Island, Dick Zigun, this week.

"We are in for a new age of Coney Island heavy on amusement and entertainment," said the founder of Coney Island USA and producer of the annual Mermaid Parade.

"Now we must challenge the developer to build the best of fantasy architecture, something that wouldn't be built in New Jersey, something that is worthy of New York City and the brand name 'Coney Island.'"

Sitt isn't a first deep-pocketed dreamer to descend onto Coney with a vision of a new golden age (see timeline).

More than a decade ago, the founder of Kansas Fried Chicken chain, Horace Bullard, attempted to

See **ASTROLAND** on page 14



After and Before: Thor Equities' vision for Coney Island's Riegelman Boardwalk (above) would make it a year-round destination. The same boardwalk was practically empty on Wednesday.



Arch friends

The Daily News sponsored the new lights at the arch in Grand Army Plaza, plus similar illuminations at Bartel-Pritchard Square in Windsor Terrace and Park Circle in Kensington — and informed its readers of its largesse by running a black-and-white photo of Publisher Mort Zuckerman's kid. The Brooklyn Papers, of course, would never stoop to such self-promotion. Pictured here is a color photo of Editor Gersh Kuntzman's daughter Jane Kuntzman (left) and pal Ella Marriott at Monday's ceremony.

City: Raccoons YOUR problem

Healthy varmints won't be touched by Animal Control

By Dana Rubinstein
The Brooklyn Papers

Raccoons are popping up across the borough, from Jacuzzi covers to backyard kiddie pools, and the city's advice? Calm down and call 311 — even though calling the city hotline won't solve your varmint problem.

"If they are healthy raccoons, we would ordinarily not remove them," said Richard Gentles, the spokesman for the city's Center for Animal Care and Control, which responds to 311 calls about raccoons.

"If they're on private property, the property owner would have to call a wildlife removal service."

And chances are, they are healthy raccoons. Brooklyn hasn't seen a rabid raccoon since at least 1992, according to the city's Health Department.

See **RACCOONS** on page 15



Callers to The Brooklyn Papers have also spotted raccoons in Bay Ridge and Borough Park backyards.

Raccoons got nuttin' on snow-white squirrel



THE BROOKLYN ANGLE

By Gersh Kuntzman

"The squirrel probably would have been caught had the parents not thrown things at the hawk to drive it away."

The woman admitted that she was "upset" at the people who challenged the natural order

See **SQUIRREL** on page 15

GO FISH! State says anti-Yards suit is threadbare

By Ariella Cohen
The Brooklyn Papers

State lawyers this week slammed a suit seeking to block the Atlantic Yards megadevelopment as nothing but a "fishing expedition" designed to delay the imminent approval of the \$4.2-billion project.

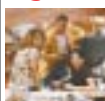
Empire State Development Corporation lawyer Douglas Krause called the lawsuit, which was filed last month by 10 residents and business owners who would be evicted to make room for Atlantic Yards, "without merit."

At issue in the case is whether the state broke the law when it condemned private property for Bruce Ratner's 16-

tower, residential, office space, retail and arena project.

But with Atlantic Yards speeding towards final state approval before the end of the year, the plaintiffs are seeking access to thousands of pages of e-mails and other correspondence between defendants in the case, who include Mayor Bloomberg. See **RATNER** on page 16

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BCAT programming catches the 'bug'

By Dana Rubinstein
The Brooklyn Papers

Want to know the difference between "professional" and "amateur" programming on Brooklyn's cable access network? Just look for the bugs.

Brooklyn Cable Access Television, or BCAT, has begun using television "bugs" — those little channel logos on the corner of your favorite TV shows — to differentiate between such long-time, community-made



hits like "Black Men Screaming" and "Access Kids Power," and "professional," Brooklyn-centric shows produced by BCAT's own staff.

Those shows — overseen by

BCAT's eight full-time producers, such as Neighborhood Beat, Reporter Roundtable, and BCAT Presents — are now labeled with a "Brooklyn Independent Television" bug. The nearly 500 shows made by everyone else are now classified as "Free Speech TV."

The "Brooklyn Independent Television" logo features text that is superimposed over a sketch of the Brooklyn Bridge, while "Free Speech TV" bug has text on top of the arch in Grand Army Plaza.

"I think people want to know what they're watching," said Greg Sattin, BCAT's executive producer. "It's really about being proud of everything that we do."

Steve de Seve, whose show "Brooklyn versus Bush" doesn't get the "professional" bug, said he doesn't mind the new classifications.

"The bugs are fine," he said. "I'd hate to be watching Fox News, and not know it. If you see the 'Fox News' bug, then you know it's a lie. If you see



the Brooklyn bug, you know it's a local thing."

Some argue that such bugs, which began appearing in January and share screen-space with the original BCAT logo, actually

mar the TV-watching experience (see www.stopthelogs.com for lengthy debates about them).

Last Monday, de Seve tuned in to BCAT, only to discover "bug" layering — the phenomenon that occurs when BCAT airs content from other sources, like the Art Network, that already has its own bug.

"Right now, in the upper left hand corner, there's the BCAT bug, then in the lower right corner there's the Art Network bug, then over that is the Free Speech bug," he said.

verses & reverses

BY LEON FINKEL

He engineered the Democratic win, And got beneath the GOP's thin skin: Now many a national political watcher is pondering the presidential stature Of Brooklyn's quintessential baby boomer, Our own senior Senator, Chuck E. Schumer. And since, politics are bound to wam ya', It pays to have someone from California, His running mate could be (though George Bush knocks her) Brooklyn-born Senator Barbara Boxer.

Leon Finkel, the poet laureate of Park Slope, sent this week's poetic offering, "A Balanced Ticket."

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KIDS SCHOOL STYLE

Brooklyn Papers

TEENS CAMPS MUSIC

Spirit's cruel, but usual, punishment

TROUBLE ON THIRD Street. Last Friday, during a rehearsal of Teen Spirit's band, Cool and Unusual Punishment, in Drummer Boy's apartment, the downstairs neighbors (DNs) called up and told them to cease and desist.

Immediately. Apparently, the DN's, who were having houseguests, had sent an e-mail to Drummer Boy's parents that explicitly asked the band not to rehearse over Thanksgiving weekend.

Understandably, the DN's were pissed. The music is cruel and unusual punishment for anyone sitting in his living or dining room.

You'd have to be a saint to live below a drummer (and these nice people seem willing to put up with his daily practice). But the ear-splitting band rehearsals are, quite truthfully, beyond the pale.

Sinatram can into Drummer Boy's parents on Third Street. They felt terrible about not reading the DN's e-mail until it was too late. And now, the DN's don't want the boys to practice in the apartment anymore. Ever.

Looks like it's time to find a rehearsal space for the boys. And that spells the end of an era.

THE BOYS HAVE BEEN rehearsing in Drummer Boy's apartment for almost three years. They even wrote a song called "2L." The people who used to live in the apartment below were noise-loaters, rock aficionados.

Only once did they call during a rehearsal. The kids got scared — unnecessarily, it turned out: "Please play 'Where is my Mind' again. It's one of our favorite songs," one of the DN's said.

Phew. The Pixies-loving old neighbors moved out and the new ones are not nearly as enamored of the pounding bass, the banging drum, and the migraine-inducing guitar feedback.

You really can't blame them.

Clearly, Drummer Boy's parents don't want to aggravate their neighbors. But they also

SMART mom

By Louise Crawford

want to support their son. It's tough to be the parents of a rock and roller these days.

And, apparently, it's not all that unusual, either. All over the Slope, kids are forming rock bands. An article in the Styles section of the Times called it the "Kid Core" scene. What seemed merely cute a few years ago isn't just cute anymore; it's serious. And these bands — Cool and Unusual Punishment, Fiasco, Care Bears on Fire, Dulaney Banks, Tiny Masters of Today, Hysterics — are talented and career oriented.

"They are developing a following on New York's burgeoning under-age music circuit, where bands too young for driving licenses have CDs, Web sites and managers," the Times wrote.

Perhaps the Times should have called them "momagers." That phrase was coined by Drummer Boy last year when the moms of Cool and Unusual Punishment helped them organize a Teens for New Orleans benefit concert at the Old Stone House.

The moms (and dads) transported equipment, sold food and tickets, and helped clean up

enough for their kids that they're in the audience at all.

TRUTH IS, the parents are as into it as the kids. And why not? The kids are showing real initiative and creativity. They're developing responsibility, ambition, and even musical chops.

It's also a perfect retort to that question, "So what's your kid up to?" He may not be enrolled at Stuyvesant, a star athlete, or racking up countless social service credits for college apps. But "He's in a band" surely counts for something.

And among the all-parent scene in Park Slope, it's practically a badge of honor to have a kid in a band — especially among parents who wish they'd had the talent (or the kind of parents it takes) to be a successful rock and roller.

In the Slope, well-connected, media-savvy parents are helping their kids big time when it comes to the Big P: Promotion. Care Bears on Fire and Fiasco have already been featured in New York Magazine and the Times. What's next: The Brooklyn Papers?

Being in a band keeps the kids off of Seventh Avenue on weekend nights when other Slope kids pay off homeless guys to buy them cheap vodka. And the parents love the music. For the most part, it's what they grew up on: punk, New Wave, roots rock. Teen Spirit loves to hear Hepcat talk about the Ramones at CBGBs, the Talking Heads at the Mudd Club and the B52s at the Pyramid.

For them, rock and roll is a way to connect — like other fathers and sons use baseball.

SO YOU CAN IMAGINE that not having a space to rehearse is a big problem for the Cool and Unusual boys. For that matter, it must be problem for many local teen rockers.

Where do all these other bands practice?

If it's true that a lot of these kids have famous parents (Laci Bascetta, son of Smart Mom's fave, Steve, is in Fiasco) which means that they probably get to practice in their parent's brownstone or palatial apartment. Grr, they don't have neighbors to worry about.

Really, who's going to complain to the guy who played a killer in "Fargo" that his kid is making too much noise playing the drums?

But what's an apartment-dwelling Park Slope teen rocker supposed to do? Dulaney Banks, a local blues guitar and vocal duo, practices in the Ninth Street subway station.

That won't work for Cool and Unusual Punishment because of Drummer Boy's kit and Teen Spirit's bass amp, each of which weighs at least 100 pounds.

Hopefully, Drummer Boy's parents, a lawyer and a political speechwriter, can negotiate a workable agreement with their downstairs neighbors. Otherwise, the boys will be out looking for another place to practice.

Prospect Park is safer than ever, right?

Louise Crawford also writes the Web site, "Only the blog knows Brooklyn."

afterwards. They cried during the sad songs and clapped along with the audience during the rowdy ones. They had to force themselves not to get up and dance.

It's embarrassing

enough for their kids that they're in the audience at all.

TRUTH IS, the parents are as into it as the kids. And why not? The kids are showing real initiative and creativity. They're developing responsibility, ambition, and even musical chops.

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Principal: An aide took candy cash

By Lilo H. Stainton
The Brooklyn Papers

A Fort Greene school principal told police that one of his teachers' aides took more than \$3,400 in cash raised through her students' candy sales — money that was earmarked for cheerleading uniforms.

The principal, Khalek Kirkland, of IS 113 on Adelphi Street, filed a police report on Nov. 20 claiming that the teachers' aide dispatched the children earlier this month with boxes of sweets. Peddling the candy to friends, family and strangers on the streets and subways, the students collected about \$8,000, police said.

But not all the money went towards clothing the pep squad at the school, also known as the Ronald Edmonds Learning Center. The aide allegedly deposited the funds in her personal bank account, and then turned over a portion of the money \$4,566 — to the school.

Describing the outstanding \$3,434 as "overdue," Kirkland notified police who are now investigating the situation. The aide has not been charged with a crime.

Kirkland also reported his allegations to the Board of Education's special investigations unit. Dina Paul Parks, the education department spokeswoman, said she could not comment on an ongoing probe.

But she did give the aide's work history: she was hired as a substitute teachers' aide in March 1998, and became full-time later that month, at PS 256. She was transferred involuntarily four times between 1998 and 2001, ending up at IS 113.

She was suspended from IS 113 — without pay — for 10 days in June, 2003, Parks added. Kirkland did not respond to telephone messages Wednesday.

But the aide told The Brooklyn Papers that our phone call was "the first time" she had heard of the principal's allegation against her.

"This is crazy," she said. "My name is being slandered."

She said she had "no idea" why her boss would tell cops she'd taken the money, but then



A teachers' aide at this Fort Greene school allegedly stole thousands of dollars from her students.

refused to comment further. One parent at the school said she could not believe that the aide did anything wrong.

"She wouldn't do a thing like that," said the parent, who declined to give her name. "She's a very nice lady."

It is the second time this semester that a Brooklyn school official has been accused of absconding with funds intended for kids.

On Oct. 26, police arrested a former Parent-Teacher Association president who allegedly pil-

fered \$1,650 from a student account at Bensonhurst's PS 205. Cops say the PTA mom, Margaret "Peggy" Borgeson, used the money to pay her personal bills.

Borgeson was arraigned Oct. 30 on grand and petit larceny charges, and released without bail. She's due to return to court on Dec. 11.

"It's not an endemic issue," said Parks, the education department spokeswoman, said. "It's just a handful of cases."

— with Christie Rick

See your CB chair with a lampshade atop his head!

By Dana Rubinstein
The Brooklyn Papers

The holiday season is upon us, and that means one thing: it's time to party, Community Board style.

Brooklyn community boards are celebrating the holidays in ways as diverse as the neighborhoods they represent — some are planning absolutely nothing, others are planning to raise the roof. Here's how your community board measures up.

• Community Board 2,

which covers Fort Greene, DUMBO, Clinton Hill, Boerum Hill, and Brooklyn Heights, isn't doing much of anything.

"We're a small reception after the full board meeting on Dec. 13," said District Manager Rob Peris. "There'll be cheese and crackers and crudités."

• Community Board 6, which encompasses Red Hook, Carroll Gardens, Park Slope, Gowanus, and Cobble Hill, will eschew the raw vegetables in favor of a "Whiz-Bang Blow-out Holiday Extravaganza" at Park Slope's Union Hall.

District Manager Craig Hammerman, promised bocce-playing, door-prize giveaways, hors d'oeuvre-eating, and plenty of drinking at the cash bar.

Community Board 2 holiday "party" Dec. 13, 6 pm, St. Francis College's Founder's Hall (180 Remsen St., between Clinton and Court streets). Call (718) 596-5410 for information. Community Board 6 holiday party, Dec. 20, 6 pm, Union Hall (702 Union St., between Fifth and Sixth avenues). Tickets \$30. For information, call (718) 643-3027.

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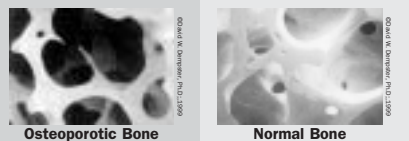
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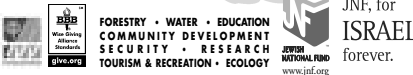
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Teens: Be careful on the 'D'

By Lilo H. Stainton

The Brooklyn Papers

A teenager riding the D train near Downtown Brooklyn lost his PSP to a pair of thugs his age who attacked him on Nov. 20, police said.

The 17-year-old boarded the Manhattan-bound subway at Ninth Avenue, at 4:15 p.m. As the train neared Downtown, a teenager stepped up and threw him into a headlock. Another came forward and punched him in the head, then removed the digital game from his right jacket pocket.

The victim ran from the train at the Pacific Street station, which is at Fourth Avenue, while the thieves stayed on board. He went to the police and reported the robbery, but was only able to describe one of the two thieves — a black boy, about 16-years-old, 6-foot-1 and 180 pounds, with corn-rowed hair and a gray sweatshirt.

Milk shakedown

Police arrested a teenage girl who allegedly beat a 40-year-old woman with a milk crate, scratching her face and tearing her shirt during a Nov. 16 brawl on Sackett Street.

The 16-year-old faces assault charges after the 4:15 p.m. attack, near the corner of Henry Street. The two were strangers according to the victim, who was not seriously hurt.

Warning words

A trio of thugs beat and robbed a teenage girl on State Street in broad daylight on Nov. 21, police said.

One brute stopped the 15-year-old as she neared Third Avenue, shortly after 1 p.m. He asked for her MP3 player and, looking to avoid trouble, the girl turned it over. But the music device wasn't enough.

The thug punched the victim in her face, causing a cut on the inside of her cheek. "What you got, a pole?" he said. "Look out for the boys."

And that's when two other thieves ran up and snatched her headphones, her student MetroCard and \$4.

The girl described the primary thug as a black man, 5-foot-9, with long braids and unusual teeth, wearing a multi-colored leather jacket and blue jeans. The second thief was a black man, 5-foot-8, dressed in white stockings and a blue dress jacket. She wasn't able to describe the third robber.

Mailbox burg

The postal service provided a portal for one burglar to get into an Atlantic Avenue business last week, police said.

The owner arrived around noon on Nov. 19 to find that someone had busted through a mailbox on a side wall, created a hole and crawled into the store, near Smith Street. The store had been locked up at 8 p.m. the night before.

Once inside, the burglar grabbed \$200 from the cash register.

Ignoble thief

Police nabbed a thief who allegedly snatched a cellphone from a woman at a bookstore on Court Street Nov. 21.

The 36-year-old victim was browsing the stacks around 11:45 a.m. when she saw a stranger grab the phone from her jacket pocket. The thief tried to bolt from the megastore, near State Street, but he didn't get far.

Security helped detain the suspect until police arrived and arrested the 47-year-old on grand larceny charges.

Burger beef

A man had his phone stolen after a fender-bender altercation near an Atlantic Avenue burger joint on Nov. 26, police said.

The 39-year-old victim had parked around 5 a.m. at a franchise — famous for its small, onion-scented square patties —

POLICE BLOTTER

near Grand Avenue. When the car next to him pulled out, that vehicle scratched the paint on his car. The victim tried to exchange insurance information with the other driver, but the man refused.

The victim threatened to call police, and the other driver grew angry. A second man leapt from his car, punched the victim in the face, and grabbed his cellphone.

The irate driver jumped back in his car, reversed direction and roared out of the parking lot.

The victim, who wasn't injured, was unable to identify the thug. But the manager of the burger joint said security cameras focused on the parking lot may have captured the entire event.

Snatchings

The northeast corner of Fort Greene Park was a hotbed of purse-snatchings last month, as two women lost their bags to teen thugs in separate incidents.

On Nov. 5, a woman lost her passport and other critical documents when she was robbed as she walked around 5 p.m. along Myrtle Avenue, near Adelphi

Street. A stranger ran up and grabbed the handbag from her shoulder before running off with four other men.

The bag held the victim's Mexican passport, birth certificate, credit cards, make-up and \$20. She didn't see the thief long enough to describe him, police said.

Almost two weeks later, police nabbed four teenage thugs who allegedly robbed a married couple of \$100 on Carlton Avenue.

The 37-year-old woman and her husband, 43, were strolling near the corner of Willoughby Avenue, around 8:30 p.m. on Nov. 19. They passed a quartet of teens, heading the other direction. Suddenly, the woman felt her purse tugged from her shoulder.

She turned, screaming, and found herself face-to-face with one teen. He pushed her to the pavement and the four boys ran off with her bag. Inside were her keys and a wallet, and the cash.

Somewhat, police tracked down the teenage thugs and nabbed all four — two age 17, two 19 — on robbery charges.

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loader attachment, worth another \$25,000.

Cell slice

A 39-year-old man was arrested after he sliced open the jeans of one man and threatened another during a pair of robberies on the D train, police said.

One 22-year-old victim saw the thief cut open the pocket of another man, age 24, before the thug turned on him, in an adventure that began around 3 a.m. The robber took both men's cellphones — with the chargers — and a total of \$41. But he didn't get away.

When the thief bolted from the train, at the DeKalb Avenue station, the victims followed close behind. They pointed their attacker out to police and officers made the arrest.

ID theft

A man lost \$200 and ID to a pair of thieves who robbed him while riding the subway on Nov. 26, police said.

The 32-year-old victim was aboard a Flatbush Avenue-bound 2 train in Downtown Brooklyn when two strangers approached him, around 10 a.m.

"Give me your money," one thug insisted. His partner punched the victim, pushed him to the floor, and grabbed his wallet. Just then, the train pulled into the Hoyt Street station, beneath the Fulton Street Mall, and the thieves bolted from the car.

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City to Scarano: Get buildings up to code

By Dana Rubinstein
The Brooklyn Papers

The city will prohibit some residents from moving into a building designed by Robert Scarano if Brooklyn's bad-boy architect does not bring their units up to code.

Following The Brooklyn Papers' front-page story on Scarano's latest design troubles, the Department of Buildings said it would block buyers from moving into several apartments in "the Washington," a new seven-floor, 45-unit Prospect Heights building, unless Scarano rebuilds their flimsy plywood mezzanines with permanent materials.

Scarano installed such wood platforms in many of the building's bedrooms to shave off excess usable square footage.

The move did get Scarano around current zoning laws, but the shoddy construction did not get him past the building code, which requires steel and concrete constructions.

"The mezzanines do not comply with the department's requirements," said Jennifer Givner, a Buildings spokeswoman.

Some speculated that Scarano's use of plywood was intentional, allowing future co-op owners to easily tear it out once the sales were complete and the Buildings Department had granted the required "certificate of occupancy."

But Scarano took issue with the notion that this was "some kind of grandiose scheme to defraud."

"The work [on the mezzanines] wasn't completed," said Scarano. "Now there's concrete."

FLASHBACK IT'S ALL LEGAL!



A plywood stage inside the Washington showed enough square footage off without Robert Scarano's intended condos to get city approval.

Scarano uses sleight of hand, plywood to beat zoning laws

By Dana Rubinstein
The Brooklyn Papers

Robert Scarano's latest design troubles have led to a city ban on some residents moving into a building he designed. The city's Department of Buildings said it would block buyers from moving into several apartments in "the Washington," a new seven-floor, 45-unit Prospect Heights building, unless Scarano rebuilds their flimsy plywood mezzanines with permanent materials.

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The Brooklyn Papers front-page article on Nov. 18.



Architect Robert Scarano

Givner, the Buildings spokeswoman, said the department may allow tenants to occupy apartments that do not have the "Scaranozines." But that angered some would-be buyers, who said the action would penalize buyers, not Scarano.

"Now people will be forced to close on their apartments or lose their deposits, without knowing if the building [is entirely up to code]," said one prospective buyer, who didn't want to be named.

"The best thing would be if no [one] was allowed to occupy the building until everything is in compliance."

Scarano isn't entirely unsympathetic to their plight, call-

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Get creative at The Artful Place



Fujiko Fitton-Gordon in her art shop and studio.

By Paul Koeppe
for The Brooklyn Papers

Aspiring artists of all ages and abilities can learn, experiment, and mingle at The Artful Place in Park Slope, an arts and crafts supplies store that also serves as a neighborhood studio.

"Community building is a big part of why customers come," said Fujiko Fitton-Gordon, who co-founded the store in 2005 with several family members. "They believe in the life benefits."

The Artful Place offers evening workshops to both adults and kids on a wide array of artistic techniques. At the "Eat Your Own Still Life" social hour, drawing subjects become food and drink for the artists. The store also hosts themed birthday parties and baby showers.

It's the only place in Brooklyn to learn

how to mold Silver Art Clay, which can be fired into 99-percent-pure silver jewelry. Sessions just for teenagers on Friday afternoon include beading, printmaking, and T-shirt design. Parents say their children gain confidence that carries over to the rest of their lives by developing their artistic side — and they have fun too.

"One of our students even passed up a chance to see the Knicks because he didn't want to miss his art lesson," said Fitton-Gordon.

And The Artful Place carries or orders all the supplies you need for drawing, painting, printmaking, mosaics, and beading.

The Artful Place (171 Fifth Avenue between Lincoln Place and Berkeley Place) offers classes for kids (\$15), teens (\$20-30) and adults (\$10-45), and weekend birthday parties (\$250 for 10-12 kids). Call (718) 399-8199 or visit www.theartfulplace.com.

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Empire warehouses could be home to concert hall

By Ariella Cohen
The Brooklyn Papers

DUMBO's long-vacant Empire Stores warehouse is being eyed for a new performing arts venue within the proposed condo-and-open-space development commonly referred to as "Brooklyn Bridge Park," state officials said this week.

The concert hall, a small venue in very early planning phases, would share the wood-columbed, Civil War-era warehouse with shops and restaurants.

The addition of a performing arts space is the latest twist in what has become a saga of stalled ambitions for the crumbling state-owned landmark, one of six waterfront commercial sites intended to generate revenue for ongoing maintenance.

The development will eventually stretch 1.3 miles along the shoreline from the Manhattan Bridge to the foot of Atlantic Avenue.

As reported in The Brooklyn Papers, the Empire State Development Corporation yanked the

warehouse from Brooklyn land baron Shaya Boyemgreen after he let it languish for three years while renovations for the nearby condo project in the neighborhood. Boyemgreen had planned to turn the building into high-end shopping mall modeled on Chelsea Market in Manhattan.

Earlier, local artists harbored dreamy visions of converting the former sugar and coffee warehouse into galleries.

Now the future of the stores has become tangled in a dispute between the ESDC and local elected officials who want luxury development within the proposed "Brooklyn Bridge Park" delayed until state officials release the underlying economics of the waterfront development.

"The state has not told the public what the revenue will be for the [condos] in the development — and until we know that, we can't know how much development is necessary," said Evan Thies, a spokesman for City Councilman David Vasyly (D-Brooklyn Heights).

But the ESDC has said it will not delay the commercial elements of the \$130-million project any longer.

"The construction of the park is scheduled to begin in the middle of January," said ESDC spokesman Mark Weinberg. Weinberg said it was too early to identify tenants for the proposed venue, but the DUMBO-based Arts at St. Ann's, which is currently housed in a nearby warehouse, believes it has the best claim.

"At some point [warehouse owner David Valentini] is going to want to develop his site and we are going to have to leave the warehouse," said Susan Feldman, artistic director. "If the right kind of space is created in the Empire Stores, it could be a fantastic place to go."

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Caught in car he stole!

Ran red light, got nabbed

By Lilo H. Stainton
The Brooklyn Papers

A joyride ended with jail for one car thief when police stopped him for running a red light in Fort Greene and found he had stolen the car from Park Slope five days earlier, police said.

The Nov. 21 arrest came during a week when burglars tried to steal at least four vehicles, escaping with three of them, and burglarizing another two in Park Slope's 78th Precinct.

The arrest began in the adjacent 88th Precinct, where Officer Sean Rogers saw the 1990 Toyota Corolla speed through several red lights, starting at the intersection of Classon and Putnam avenues, and then barrel through a stop sign. Once he stopped the vehicle, he found the driver didn't have a valid license.

Rogers ran the plate and learned the sedan had been reported stolen from Seventh Avenue, near Park Place, on Nov. 17. When he returned at 11 am on Nov. 19, the car had disappeared.

The 37-year-old suspect now faces multiple charges for car theft, reckless driving, driving without a license, and failing to obey traffic laws.

In other incidents this week:

POLICE BLOTTER

• A Honda Accord disappeared from 11th Street, near Eighth Avenue, sometime after 8 am on Nov. 16. When the 29-year-old owner returned two days later, at 8 pm, the 1994 sedan was gone.

• A 1999 GMC Yukon parked at Douglass Street, near Fourth Avenue, was broken into. The 26-year-old owner left the truck at 4:30 pm on Nov. 20 and returned at 10:30 am the next morning to find the passenger window broken and the ignition damaged.

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In other incidents this week:

later, the left side window was broken and her laptop was missing.

Hospital heist

Police nabbed a 47-year-old man after he robbed a patient inside a hospital room and attacked two security guards as he tried to escape.

The suspect burst into the room of a 33-year-old stranger at New York Methodist Hospital, around 4:20 pm on Nov. 23. He snatched a Razr cellphone, and the charger, and bolted for the door.

Two guards at the hospital, on Fifth Street near Seventh Avenue, tried to stop the thief. But the suspect decked one guard who tried to reason with him and then punched a second guard who physically blocked his way. Both victims were left with painful bruises.

The guards held the thief for 40 minutes until Police Officer Sugey Castillo arrived and placed him in cuffs.

Dissed doorman

A Prospect Park West doorman was robbed in the elevator of his building by a man who claimed to be visiting a friend on Nov. 21, police said.

The thief arrived at the building, near Montgomery Place, around 6:30 am and said he was headed to an apartment on the third floor. The doorman led him into the elevator and closed the door. But before they began their ascent, the robber turned

on the man and punched him in the face.

The thief then grabbed a chain from the victim's neck and snatched his watch. The robber opened the elevator doors and bolted from the lift.

Quick heist

It took a jewel thief less than a half hour to clean out the collection of a Lincoln Place resident on Nov. 20, police said.

The 61-year-old tenant left her home, between Seventh and Eighth avenues, at 7:30 am. When she returned, just 30 minutes later, she found the kitchen window open and the front door unlocked. In her bedroom, the jewelry box was missing several items, including a designer watch, pearl-drop earrings and a gold necklace with an emerald-and-diamond pendant.

Prowler nabbed

Police caught a would-be burglar hiding in the basement of an 11th Street building on Nov. 20.

The 29-year-old tenant left his second-floor home in the complex, between Seventh and Eighth avenues, at 2 pm and returned 15 minutes later to find something amiss with the front door.

Once inside, he found a stranger cowering inside the building's basement. But the man had not gotten inside any apartments and nothing was stolen.

That allowed Police Officer Frank Emmanuel to arrest the 48-year-old man on attempted burglary charges.

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Senior fails for the ol' Lotto scam

By Lilo H. Stainton
The Brooklyn Papers

68th Precinct

An older woman lost \$2,000 to a pair of thieves who tricked her with a tale of a winning lottery ticket that they could not cash because of their immigrant status, police said.

The 64-year-old victim said two strangers approached her at 1 pm on Nov. 20, as she walked along Fifth Avenue, near 84th Street. They explained that they lacked proper immigration papers and, because of that, could not collect their winnings.

The pair offered to "exchange" their ticket for her cash, suggesting she could cash it in instead. The victim agreed, and turned over \$200 bills in exchange for the ticket stub — which turned out to be a dud, police said.

By then, of course the tricksters were gone.

Rx taken

Someone stole \$400 in toys, \$60 in mouthwash and a \$10,000 heating and cooling unit — among other items — from a pharmacy on 13th Avenue, near 72nd Street, police said.

The 29-year-old owner said the store was locked at 6 pm on Nov. 18. When he returned, at 5 pm on Nov. 20, he found the padlock clipped from the back door.

Once inside, he realized the basement had been ransacked and the merchandise and equipment stolen. Other missing items included a 10-pack of nail-polish remover, worth \$50, and \$400 in medical supplies.

Sneaky

A 71-year-old woman didn't realize she was targeted by a pickpocket for several hours on Nov. 24, police said.

The victim realized her misfortune when she tried to use her wallet at a store, near the corner of Fourth Avenue and 67th Street, around 1 pm. The billfold had been inside her jacket pocket two hours earlier. She lost various ID cards, a MasterCard and \$55.

Burglar brother?

Forget about sibling rivalry — this was sibling thievery, cops said.

Someone snatched a DVD player from a Dodge Durango on Fort Hamilton Parkway — and

the owner suspects her brother.

The 30-year-old victim left her 1999 SUV near the corner of 88th Street at 10:30 pm on Nov. 23. When she returned, at 9:30 am the following morning, there was no damage to the red Dodge, but the \$1,500 player had disappeared.

The victim told cops that she and her brother had had a falling out and are no longer speaking. He is the only other person with keys to the vehicle, she told police.

62nd Precinct

Big drug bust

Police on the lookout for burglars scored big when they busted a drug dealer with more than 100 bags of heroin and cocaine and \$1,600 in cash on Oct. 26, police officials told The Brooklyn Papers.

The 62nd Precinct's Burglary Apprehension Team were on a pre-dawn stakeout when they watched a suspicious man walk up to a Nissan Maxima parked on Benson Avenue, near Bay 32nd Street. When the cops — dressed in plain clothes — saw the driver drop the window and exchange something with the pedestrian, the officers made their move.

"It was clearly a drug deal," said Sgt. Christopher Zaleski, leader of the 62nd Precinct anti-burglary team. The other team members involved in the arrest were officers Gilberto Alonso, Frank Kolarovic and Michael O'Halloran.

Police busted the narcotics-dealer, a 23-year-old Brooklyn man, collecting 96 bags of heroin, 20 bags of cocaine and \$1,600 in cash. Together, the drugs would be worth more than \$1,200 on the street.

The other suspect, the man who brought the drugs, escaped.

One-buck mug

Talk about minimal returns.

A thug with a boxcutter scored \$1 during a knife-point robbery on Bay Parkway on Nov. 25, police said.

The 24-year-old victim said he was rushed by a white man about his age as he left a restaurant near 85th Street, around 1:30 am. The thief flashed the blade and insisted, "Empty your pockets." The thief grabbed a single and ran.

The victim wasn't hurt.

Police 'thief'

A man claiming to be a police detective robbed two men of \$200 on Nov. 25, police said.

62/68 BLOTTER

and the victims claim the fake cop had targeted them before.

The 28-year-old victim was with a friend on New Utrecht Avenue, near 71st Street, when the impostor approached, shortly after 2 am. He threw both of them up against a wall, insisted he was an officer, and snatched \$100 from each victim.

The thug then jumped into a brown four-door vehicle and roared away on 71st Street. Neither victim was seriously hurt, but both say the same suspect has robbed them in the past. Details on the earlier heists were not available.

McBrawl arrest

Hold the Happy Meals, there's a fight at the fry stand!

Police broke up a brawl at an 86th Street burger franchise after one worker doused another with hot oil on Nov. 21.

It's not clear what prompted the argument between two employees of the burger joint chain, between 24th Avenue and Bay 37th Street. But things grew violent around 10:30 pm, when one teen tossed some of the bubbling grease at his co-worker. The victim suffered serious burns on his left arm.

The 18-year-old oil-slinger faces felony assault charges.

Armed bill brawl

Sometimes, the customer isn't always right.

Police arrested a patron at an eatery on 65th Street near 22nd

credit cards and her driver's license after the 5:40 pm heist, near the corner of 80th Street. The 40-year-old victim said he "asked him nicely" to pay up, but the thug pulled a knife instead and slashed him on the left ear.

Pocket picked

A sneaky thief plucked the wallet from a woman's jacket pocket — and racked up a \$1,300 bill — before the victim realized she had been robbed, police said.

The mugger grabbed the goods as the 39-year-old emerged from a grocery on 86th Street and 23rd Avenue, around 6 pm on Nov. 22. She never saw the thief, but he quickly used the credit cards inside to make multiple purchases at different stores.

Biker theft

A mugger on a bicycle stole a cellphone from a woman walking on 86th Street near Bay Parkway at 10 am on Nov. 21, police said.

Missing mover

Beware: there's a Bobcat on the prowl.

Cops are on the lookout for a Bobcat-brand earth-moving machine that escaped from a construction site on Avenue P. Workers at the site, near West Third Street, said the critter disappeared sometime after 5 pm on Nov. 21 and dawn the following day.

Burglar brother?

Someone snatched a DVD player from a Dodge Durango on Fort Hamilton Parkway,

near 71st Street — and the owner suspects her brother, police said.

The victim told police the siblings had a falling out, and the brother had a key.

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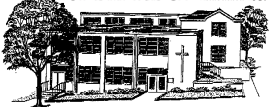
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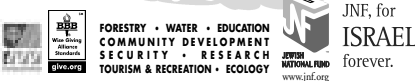


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Ridge strip club cover up?

Owner insists 'Club Shadows' not a topless joint

By Matthew Lysiak
for The Brooklyn Papers

Nude dancers? Now where'd ya get that idea?

Days after a sign featuring the silhouette of a curvy woman and the words "exotic dancers" appeared on a windowless Fourth Avenue bar, the new owner assured his neighbors that his "Club Shadows" was strictly a Vegas-style dance club, not a topless joint.

"Maybe we conveyed the wrong message," Manager Joseph Domovsky said. "That's why we are trying to correct this right away. I love Bay Ridge. Club Shadows will provide a high-class, high fashion environment."

"I promise that everyone in my club will keep their clothes on," he added. The controversy began when the sign

appeared on the now-vacated Reagle Beagle, a bar between 90th and 91st streets, advertising the grand opening of Club Shadows on Nov. 30.

Calls to the local community board started almost immediately, said CB10 District Manager Josephine Beckmann.

The "exotic dancers" sign wasn't the only cause for alarm. An invitation to the club that had been posted on MySpace also promised "exotic entertainment all night long," and that "hot girls are free all night long!!!"

Community leaders promised to keep Club Shadows' doors closed—even before the jiggle joint opened. But Domovsky said that his critics have him all wrong.

"This is going to be the best club in Brooklyn," he said. "I think people saw

'exotic' and thought 'erotic.' Nothing erotic going on here. When we say 'exotic,' we mean Vegas-quality exotic costumes."

Beckmann claims Domovsky doesn't have a liquor license, but he says he does.

"Ownership is staying the same," he said. "Club Shadows is only a management company and there would be no reason for the new owner to reapply for a license he already has."

As for the boarded up windows, Domovsky has an explanation for that too.

"Under the previous management, the neighborhood had two complaints: rowdiness and noise," Domovsky said. "We hired extra security and soundproofed the windows to address these concerns."

The manager's explanation didn't im-

press City Councilman Vince Gentile (D-Bay Ridge).

"Whether you change the R to an X is of little consequence," Gentile said. "If it looks like a strip club, and acts like a strip club, it is probably a strip club."

Gentile added that Domovsky was evasive when questioned by his staff and that "alarm bells went off when specifics of the club appeared shadowy."

He added, "I plan on having state liquor authority enforcement officers at the opening, and if he doesn't have the proper credentials, my office will request that they shut the club down."

The club was set to open on Thursday, after this paper went to press. See next week's Bay Ridge Paper for full coverage, whether the dancers have it or not.

City to Scarano: Get buildings up to code

By Dana Rubinstein
The Brooklyn Papers

The city will prohibit some residents from moving into a building designed by Robert Scarano if Brooklyn's bad-boy architect does not bring their units up to code.

Following The Brooklyn Papers' front-page story on Scarano's latest design troubles, the Department of Buildings said it would block buyers from moving into several apartments in "the Washington," a new seven-floor, 45-unit Prospect Heights building, unless Scarano rebuilds their flimsy plywood mezzanines with permanent materials.

Scarano installed such wood platforms in many of the building's bedrooms to shave off excess usable square footage. The move did get Scarano around current zoning laws, but the shoddy construction did not get him past the building code, which requires steel and concrete constructions.

"The mezzanines do not comply with the department's requirements," said Jennifer Givner, a Buildings spokeswoman.

Some speculated that Scarano's use of plywood was intentional, allowing future co-op owners to easily tear it out once the sales were complete and the Buildings' Department had granted the required "certificate of occupancy."

But Scarano took issue with the notion that this was "some kind of grandiose scheme to defraud."

"The work [on the mezzanines] wasn't completed," said Scarano. "Now there's concrete."

Givner, the Buildings spokeswoman, did say the department may allow tenants to occupy apartments that do not have the "Scaranozines." But, that angered some would-be buyers, who said the action would penalize buyers, not Scarano.

"Now people will be forced to close on their apartments or lose their deposits, without knowing if the building is entirely up to code," said one prospective buyer, who didn't want to be named.

"The best thing would be if no [one] was allowed to occupy the building until everything is in compliance."

Scarano isn't entirely unsympathetic to their plight, calling his mezzanine modifications "unfortunate for the buyers," but he did point out that only one of the mezzanine apartments actually has a buyer at this point.

The rest have been pulled off market," said Scarano.

Scarano, who calls himself the architect of "New Brooklyn," has completed 75 buildings in Brooklyn and 400 city-wide. Another 200 are in the works.

He argues that his work has paved the way for the transformation of countless neighborhoods, including the Washington's Prospect Heights.

"That building pretty much cemented the neighborhood in terms of its jumpstart," said Scarano.

FLASHBACK IT'S ALL LEGAL!



Scarano uses sleight of hand, plywood to beat zoning laws

By Dana Rubinstein
The Brooklyn Papers

Robert Scarano's latest design troubles, the Department of Buildings said it would block buyers from moving into several apartments in "the Washington," a new seven-floor, 45-unit Prospect Heights building, unless Scarano rebuilds their flimsy plywood mezzanines with permanent materials.

The Brooklyn Papers front-page article on Nov. 18.



Architect Robert Scarano

But his pioneering instincts haven't saved him from runs with the Buildings Department.

Earlier this year, he agreed to surrender the right to certify his own designs on the grounds that he misrepresented some building plans.

City Councilwoman Letitia James, who's been involved in the latest debacle, thinks these most recent developments should be the last straw.

Scarano needs to be brought up on disciplinary charges," said James (D-Prospect Heights).

"He does shoddy work. He overbuilds."

"The only solution as far as I'm concerned is to revoke his license."

Ratner's brother on the warpath

The Brooklyn Papers

His brother Bruce is not exactly beloved in Park Slope, but Michael Ratner will certainly earn brownie points this week after calling for Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld to be prosecuted for war crimes.

Ratner's group, the Center for Constitutional Rights, filed a criminal complaint in Germany against Rumsfeld, Attorney General Alberto Gonzales and former CIA Director George Tenet on behalf of 12 Iraqis and Saudis who had been allegedly abused at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay by their American captors.

"There has to be some accountability for Donald Rumsfeld," Ratner told Bloomberg News.

Funny, that's what many Brooklynites are saying about his brother.

—Gersh Kuntzman



Bruce Ratner

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CHECKIN' IN WITH...**Gersh Kuntzman**

It's not often that the editor of an illustrious newspaper chain ends up being featured in the very pages he edits — but our editor, Gersh Kuntzman, is... how shall we put this... unconventional. But interviewing our own editor is completely reasonable because the peripatetic Kuntzman has a book coming out. "Chrismukkah: The Official Guide to the World's Most-Beloved Holiday" is a hilarious take on holiday rituals, family tensions and wintertime recipes — and, conveniently, it makes a perfect gift this Chrismukkah season (Kuntzman will be reading from the book on Monday, Dec. 4, at the Park Slope YMCA's "Writers on the Rooftop" series). In an unprecedented interview that could cause a rift in the space-time continuum, Kuntzman checked in with our editor, Gersh Kuntzman, who later edited the interview with Kuntzman.

Q: I'm going to go on record as saying you're a complete hack. Interviewing yourself. The nerve!

A: Look, I don't give too many interviews, so you should be thankful.

Q: You do seem to keep busy, what with your editing work at The Brooklyn Papers, your monthly BCAT show, your award-winning show, "SUVs: The Musical!" and your scintillating coverage of community board meetings. How do you do it?

A: Well, you know me. If there's one motto that defines Gersh Kuntzman it's this: Live life to the fullest.

Q: Remember who you're talking to. I know Gersh Kuntzman. In fact, I am Gersh Kuntzman. And the Gersh Kuntzman I know spends most of his time covering. That said, let's talk about the new book. What is Chrismukkah anyway?

A: My friend, you're asking the wrong question. It's not "What is Chrismukkah?" but rather, "Why has Chrismukkah been hidden from us all these years? Why don't Americans know even the basics of this beloved holiday?"

Q: Since you're interviewing yourself, you might as well answer.

A: Chrismukkah is every bit as venerable as those "more-popular" holidays: Christmas, Hanukkah, Flag Day. But these knock-offs get all the attention.

Q: Wait a second, Christmas and Hanukkah are knock-offs of Chrismukkah and not the other way around?

A: I just said that, brainless. We really should talk to the editor about getting better reporters here. But, yes, Chrismukkah is actually the original yuletide holiday. It dates back to when the Four Wise Men showed up after the birth of the baby Jesus.

Q: Four Wise Men? I thought there were only three.

A: O vey and praise Jesus! As the Bible's Book of Rotations tells us...

Q: Book of Rotations? What's that?

A: You really don't know the Chrismukkah story do you? Well, it's all in my book — all of the forgotten Biblical tales, plus Chrismukkah songs, the story of the world's first inter-marriage, Charles Dickens's never-before-published novella, "A Chrismukkah Carol," and, of course, the 10 primary rituals of Chrismukkah. My favorite is rule number 10: Never have a long goodbye at the door — which is really good advice all year long.

Q: I hear there are also traditional Chrismukkah recipes.

A: Yes. Try the ham latkes, gefilte shrimp or the oyster hamantaschen. They're out of this world!

Q: Is Chrismukkah in danger of becoming overcommercialized?

A: Of course it is. Commercialization of the holidays is exactly why everyone should buy my book. For just \$14.99, you can discover numerous ways in which Chrismukkah can be saved from the forces of capitalism. For just \$14.99 — available at stores near you! — you can help keep Chrismukkah pure.

Q: Where do you stand on Festivus?

A: Festivus is a fake, made-up holiday.

They'll re-take Manhattan

Brooklynites head to the city



The glamorous life: Laila Gheith, 29, in her Upper East Side apartment after her move back to "the city" from Brooklyn.

By Lindsay Feldman
For The Brooklyn Papers

As Melanie Greenberg unpacked boxes in her new 500-square-foot Lower East Side apartment, her next-door neighbor was, for no apparent reason, on the fire escape singing mournful ballads.

And that was the good news. Greenberg, a 27-year-old freelance writer, was back in the city where she felt home — just two years after she had moved to Williamsburg to save money.

But within months of that move, the traditionally Italian neighborhood she loved started changing. And Greenberg didn't like the changes.

"Big high-rise buildings started going up and slowly but surely the hipsters started spilling into my part of the neighborhood," said Greenberg, who is now single.

"I decided I wanted to go back to Manhattan — specifically to Alphabet City — where there is a real feeling of community and more diversity than probably just about any other neighborhood of the city."

Greenberg is not alone. The type of hipsters who once moved from Manhattan into Williamsburg, Cobble Hill and

Park Slope like crowds at a Beach concert are now singing a different tune: "We'll re-take Manhattan."

Prudential Douglas Elliman broker Ted Karagannis said that as the price difference between the two boroughs shrinks, those who once fled Manhattan are now returning.

"Brooklyn is losing a lot of its young artist types back to Manhattan because the rents are too expensive," Karagannis said. "And a lot of Brooklynites who were able to sell their apartments cashed out and moved back to Manhattan because it was their first choice to begin with."

It was always the first choice for Laila Gheith, 29, a Bay Ridge resident who always preferred everything about Manhattan, from the nightlife to the take-out.

So when she found a co-op in Midtown last month that was cheaper than comparable places in Park Slope and Carroll Gardens, she grabbed it. Gheith, a single associate with a midtown investment group is now thrilled to see cats instead of strollers.

And she doesn't miss that R train.

"It was the next-to-last stop. It became really annoying," she said. Some of those heading to the

greener pastures of Manhattan have little pleasant to say about Brooklyn.

"The East Village atmosphere is better. The people are more like me," said Tara Croft, 34, an unmarried writer for a business magazine. "They're single and they like to hang out. In Park Slope it was more coupley with kids and families."

Croft recently moved to the East Village from Park Slope and is happy as a Mobo fan gobbling a \$14 sandwich at Teany.

"The nightlife scene is better for me here," said Croft, who mostly eats at restaurants.

Nobody moves to Park Slope for the nightlife. But those who move for a higher quality of life quickly discover the borough's Achilles heel: Brooklyn is farther from Manhattan than Manhattan is from Manhattan.

Realtor Brian Lewis said he sold a two-bedroom apartment on the Upper West Side to a couple in their 30s with one child. The couple had moved from the Upper West Side just 18 months ago to a home in Cobble Hill.

"They quickly realized their quality of life suffered due to added commute times and less city conveniences," said Lewis, senior vice president at Halstead

See **RETAKE** on page 16

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A Split Decision For Our Kids

By Randi Weingarten

This month brought both a real high and a low for public school students. The high mark came a day before Election Day in the form of a tentative two-year contract between the United Federation of Teachers, which represents New York City's 100,000 public school educators, and the City of New York. This is great news for teachers and bodes well for the future of education here.

For one thing, the agreement — which still must be ratified — is unprecedented in that it was reached 11 months before the current contract expires, making it the earliest contract agreement ever reached between the city and the UFT. Settling almost a year early brings stability and certainty, particularly after two bitter contract fights. It will allow educators — for the rest of the mayor's term — to focus on student achievement and success and let our union fight for essential education reforms, including reducing class size, improving student discipline and full-day universal pre-kindergarten.

Another important aspect is an across-the-board pay raise that will boost the salary of the most experienced educators to the \$100,000 mark — a milestone that veteran educators in many surrounding suburbs already earn. It also includes a longevity increase for educators who stay in the system for five years, providing another way to improve educational stability and continuity for students.

All of this means that between 2002 and 2008 teacher salaries in New York City have become far more competitive — having risen 40%. As a result, we are in

a better position to attract — and keep — the best and brightest teachers for our kids. The city's willingness to help our teachers approach parity with the suburbs — without again demanding they work longer hours — conveys a sense of respect for teachers and a commitment to education. Honoring teachers by providing better compensation boosts morale among the workforce and shows the rest of the world we put a real value on public education.

Unfortunately, this month also brought us the final court decision in the Campaign for Fiscal Equity case.

In that case, parents, educators and community activists asked the state to give New York City enough resources to provide students with a sound, basic education. Governor Pataki fought it for years, but Governor-elect Eliot Spitzer has repeatedly indicated he wants to settle the case quickly by providing the city with the dollars in state education aid that previous court decisions said our city school students deserve. Also, Mayor Bloomberg has embarked upon a capital construction plan that should help address the issues of class size and school

safety by providing additional space in modern, technologically advanced and secure buildings.

While the court said the Legislature and the governor-elect must appropriate more funds to New York City's school children it significantly reduced the amount — to \$1.9 billion from the \$4 billion to \$6 billion all of us thought was needed.

There are many important needs, but none as crucial as lowering class sizes — which are 10% to 60% higher here than in the rest of the state. Study after study shows that kids in smaller classes outperform children in large classes. There are fewer discipline problems in smaller classes and kids in those classes are more likely to graduate high school and go on to college than students in big classes. Still, our classes are bulging. For example, in the rest of the state there are 20 kids in a class in Sequential Math I, a Regents class; in New York City, it's nearly 33 students. That's 63% larger!

Gov-elect Spitzer has said he remains committed to providing more than what the Court of Appeals ordered because he — like many teachers, educators and parents — knows that amount is not nearly enough to give the system the real reform it needs and give our children the kind of education they deserve. Now it's time for the governor-elect and the Legislature to find a way to give our children the kind of education they richly deserve — and turn this good news/bad news month into one that is strictly good news.

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OUR OPINION

Thor is god of Coney

THE NEWS THIS WEEK THAT A Coney Island real-estate developer will raze Astroland and build a \$1.5-billion, Vegas-like menagerie was greeted with the usual hue and cry from nostalgia-addled Brooklynites who remember the "glory days" of Coney Island.

But anyone who has actually spent time in Coney Island — the one that exists today, not the one in those misty water-color memories, to quote Brooklynite Barbra Streisand — is cheering the move by Thor Equities to purchase the land where Astroland sits and clear it after next summer's carnival season.

"It's not going to be the Coney Island the way I know Coney Island," one longtime resident told the Daily News this week, setting up a great

punchline: "They're going to make it nice." Indeed, "nice" is a commodity in limited quantities in today's Coney Island. The reality on the ground is that the amusement area is dirty, run-down and uninviting. Where other Americans get to enjoy family friendly theme parks, visitors to Coney Island get a garbage dump by the sea.

While beloved by many, Astroland, whose name harkens back to the optimistic days of the Apollo moonshots, shows its age. Even the most charitable visitor can't help but feel that this rotting playground feels like a placeholder for something better.

Others have certainly rushed in — and failed — where Thor Equities dares to tread. But unlike earlier dreamers, developer Joe Sitt owns far more properties and has made a far-larger fi-

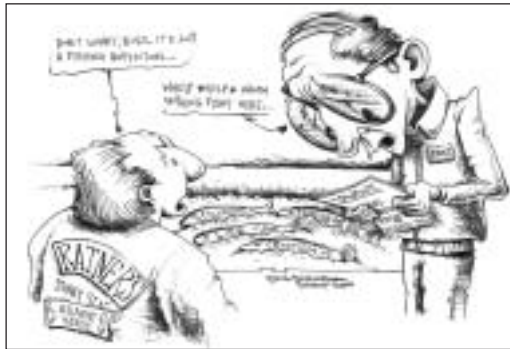
nanacial commitment, spending well over \$100 million just on land acquisition so far.

And unlike developers in other parts of Brooklyn, Sitt doesn't have his hand extended in search of massive public subsidies — at least, not yet.

Sitt says he is committed to keeping what is great about Coney — its honky-tonk spirit, its wacky architecture and, of course, the land-marked 80-year-old Cyclone roller coaster — even while he sweeps away the filth and the 1960s-era kitsch.

And unlike Disney — which scouted land in Coney Island a few years ago — Sitt is a real New Yorker. That's no small thing in a neighborhood that was terrified by the possibility that a G-rated Mickey Mouse would someday be strutting down the Boardwalk alongside the R-rated Mermaids of Dick Zigun's "Coney Island USA."

ALL DRAWN OUT



Curtis Peck

LETTERS

Food Co-op member: Papers racist

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All letters must be signed and include the writer's home address and phone number (only the writer's name and neighborhood are published with the letter). Letters may be edited and will not be returned. The earlier in the week you send your letter, the better.

To the editor,

I am an African-American member of the Park Slope Food Co-op who found your article about the Co-op both racist and insulting ("Has Slope Food Co-op's lefty ethos led to crime?" Nov. 11).

Evidently, the staff writer believes that searching African-Americans would be a good idea. In her article, she wrote about why the Co-op's bag-search policy was curtailed, saying, "Many believe that the members are so liberal that they won't allow themselves to question people who might appear to be 'outsiders.'"

In other words, if they had stopped and searched all the African-Americans entering the store, crime would disappear.

There are many in our community — African-American and white — who have fought to end racism and discrimination in all its manifestations.

It is dismaying to see your paper condemning a group for its open-mindedness. D. Dieridge, Crown Heights

Editor's note: Our writer did not suggest that searching African-Americans would be a good idea. She merely reported that such searches were discontinued amid charges of racial profiling.

Help Mom & Pop

To the editor,

I read with interest your column about David Walenta's frustration over the presence of a Starbucks in DUM-

BO ("In land of Walentas, Mom & Pop are still king," The Brooklyn Angle, Nov. 18). As someone who grew up in South Brooklyn (before names like "Cobble Hill" came about to inflate real estate prices), the angst that afflicts David Walentas actually puts him in good company.

When old man Rockefeller set about acquiring land to build Rockefeller Center, he ran up against one set of merchants who wouldn't go along with the plan. As a result, they had to re-design the Radio City building to fit around Breen & Harley's Bar.

A similar situation happened in Las Vegas when the Excalibur Hotel had to re-design its east side parking lot to fit around an existing gas stop and mini-mart.

John E. Kraft, Paradise, NV

Wrong on Fratelli

To the editor,

I'm writing this letter after reading the article regarding the closing of Fratelli Ravioli ("Oh, brother: Court Street institution Fratelli Ravioli closes," Nov. 18).

The article falsely suggested that the people who ran the store didn't care about the family name. I suggest that you interview the woman, Isabel, who ran the store on Court and Union streets. Isabel worked in that store as a young girl. She learned all aspects of the business. Many old-timers on Court Street could testify to that. Isabel put her pride into that store.

The problem is storeowners today

have to deal with high rents and deal with a clientele that wants to buy only one meal or one cookie. The neighborhood isn't the same as years ago. I've watched this neighborhood transform from an Italian heritage to a bunch of Yuppies.

Catherine Davis, Cobble Hill

Scarano's business

To the editor,

Thank you for the courageously blunt writing and for having enough grace to allow Robert Scarano the last words in your article ("And it's all legal!" Nov. 18). I won't attempt to interpret the meaning of his closing phrase — "People do not have their facts in order as usual..." This height makes the level of floor area. End of story — beyond observing that he did not explicitly tell you to mind your own business.

Implicit meanings are another matter, and I'm grateful for your reporting, for your prose and the accompanying photograph. It's a marvelous public service.

Walter Dufresne, Park Slope

Sects and the city

To the editor,

I wanted to thank you for the lovely article you wrote about our brother who mows the lawns around DUMBO ("Lawn and Order," The Brooklyn Angle, Nov. 11).

But I did want to correct something

you wrote. We Jehovah's Witnesses are not a sect. While it is true that we have absolutely no affiliation with the churches of Christendom, we are Christians.

We are a theocratic organization. We are also one of the fastest-growing groups of Christians in the world. We base everything in our lives on scriptures and Bible principles. That is why you see our brother mowing the lawns. It is loving to do so.

We have had hundreds, maybe thousands, of brothers from all over the world in New Orleans helping our brothers to rebuild their houses. After the Loma Prieta earthquake in Northern California in 1989, we rebuilt a number of houses and brought in supplies. We started on Friday and had the houses painted and yards planted by Sunday even though it was raining!

Come to a Kingdom Hall in your area and meet the friends. They will be so happy for you to visit. We know how to be true friends.

Joanne Hill, San Jose, CA

Thank you, IRS

To the editor:

Congratulations are in order to the IRS in realizing the fed coffers are losing money with PILOTS ("Broad bombshell," Nov. 4).

Any real estate developer worth his or her salt ought to have another financial angle. If not, just call it a day.

Ahousa Albritton, Prospect Heights



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PUBLISHER Celia Weinreb (ext 104)

EDITOR Gersh Kurtzman (ext 119)

SENIOR EDITOR/PRODUCTION MANAGER Vince DiMiceli (ext 125)

GO BROOKLYN/BROOKLYN BRIDE EDITOR Lisa J. Curtis (ext 131)

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City to Scarano: Get buildings up to code

By Dana Rubinstein
The Brooklyn Papers

The city will prohibit some residents from moving into a building designed by Robert Scarano if Brooklyn's bad-boy architect does not bring their units up to code.

Following The Brooklyn Papers' front-page story on Scarano's latest design troubles, the Department of Buildings said it would block buyers from moving into several apartments in "the Washington," a new seven-floor, 45-unit Prospect Heights building, unless Scarano rebuilds their flimsy plywood mezzanines with permanent materials.

Scarano installed such wood platforms in some of the building's bedrooms to shave off excess usable square footage.

The move did get Scarano around current zoning laws, but the shoddy construction did not get him past the building code, which requires steel and concrete constructions.

"The mezzanines do not comply with the department's requirements," said Jennifer Grivner, a Buildings spokeswoman. Some speculated that Scarano

FLASHBACK IT'S ALL LEGAL!



Scarano uses sleight of hand, plywood to beat zoning laws

By Dana Rubinstein
The Brooklyn Papers
Scarano is the controversial architect of the Washington, a new seven-floor, 45-unit Prospect Heights building in Brooklyn. The building is designed to be a "flexible" space, with units that can be converted into offices, retail space, or even a small theater. The building is currently under construction, and the city is requiring Scarano to rebuild the flimsy plywood mezzanines with permanent materials.

The Brooklyn Papers front-page article on Nov. 18.

no use of plywood was intentional, allowing future co-op owners to easily tear it out once the sales were complete and the Buildings Department had granted the required "certificate of occupancy."

But Scarano took issue with the notion that this was "some kind of grandiose scheme to defraud."

"The work [on the mezzanines] was not completed," said Scarano. "Now there's concrete."

Grivner, the Buildings spokeswoman, said the department may allow tenants to occupy apartments that do not have the "Scaranoesque." But, that angered some would-be buyers, who said the action would penalize buyers, not Scarano.

"Now people will be forced to close on their apartments or lose their deposits, without knowing if the building is entirely up to code," said one prospective buyer, who didn't want to be named.

"The best thing would be if no [one] was allowed to occupy the building until everything is in compliance."

Scarano isn't entirely unsympathetic to their plight, calling his mezzanine modifications "unfortunate for the buyers," but he did point out that only one of the mezzanine apartments actually has a buyer at this point.

The rest have been pulled off market," said Scarano. Scarano, who calls himself the architect of "New Brooklyn," has completed 75 buildings in Brooklyn and 400 city-wide. Another 200 are in the works.

He argues that his work has paved the way for the transformation of countless neighbor-



Architect Robert Scarano

hoods, including the Washington's Prospect Heights.

"That building pretty much cemented the neighborhood in terms of its jumpstart," said Scarano.

But his pioneering instincts haven't saved him from run-ins with the Buildings Department.

Earlier this year, he agreed to surrender the right to certify his own designs on the grounds that he misrepresented some building plans.

City Councilwoman Letitia James, who's been involved in the latest brooklyn, thinks these most recent developments should be the last straw.

"Scarano needs to be brought up on disciplinary charges," said James (D-Prospect Heights).

"He does shoddy work. He overbuilds."

"The only solution as far as I'm concerned is to revoke his license."



The Empire Stores in Empire-Fulton Ferry State Park in DUMBO.

Empire warehouses could be home to concert hall

By Ariella Cohen
The Brooklyn Papers

DUMBO's long-vacant Empire Stores warehouse is being eyed for a new performing arts venue within the proposed condo-and-open-space development commonly referred to as "Brooklyn Bridge Park," state officials said this week.

The concert hall, a small venue in very early planning phases, would share the wood-columned, Civil War-era warehouse with shops and restaurants.

The addition of a performing arts space is the latest twist in what has become a saga of stalled ambitions for the crumbling state-owned landmark, one of six waterfront com-

mmercial sites intended to generate revenue for ongoing maintenance.

The development will eventually stretch 1.5 miles along the shoreline from the Manhattan Bridge to the foot of Atlantic Avenue. As reported in The Brooklyn Papers, the Empire State Development Corporation yanked the warehouse from Brooklyn land baron Shura Boyelgreen after he let it languish for three years while moving forward with luxury condo projects in the neighborhood. Boyelgreen had planned to turn the building into high-end shopping mall modeled on Chelsea Market in Manhattan.

Earlier, local artists harbored dreams of converting the former sugar and coffee warehouse into galleries.

Now the future of the stores has become tangled in a dispute between the ESDC and local elected officials who want luxury development within the proposed "Brooklyn Bridge Park" delayed until state officials release the underlying economics of the waterfront development.

"The state has not told the public what the revenue will be for [the condos] in the development and until we know that, we can't know how much development is necessary," said Evan Thies, a spokesman for City Councilman David Vassky (D-Brooklyn Heights).

But the ESDC has said it will not delay the commercial elements of the \$130-million project any longer.

"The construction of the park is scheduled to begin in the middle of January," said ESDC spokesman Mark Weinberg.

Weinberg said it was too early to identify tenants for the proposed venue, but the DUMBO-based Arts at St. Ann's, which is currently housed in a nearby warehouse, believes it has the best claim.

"At some point [warehouse owner David Walentas] is going to want to develop his site and we are going to have to leave the warehouse," said Susan Feldman, artistic director. "If the right kind of space is created in the Empire Stores, it could be a fantastic place to go."

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Ratner's brother on the warpath

The Brooklyn Papers

His brother Bruce is not exactly beloved in Park Slope, but Michael Ratner will certainly earn brownie points this week after calling for Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld to be prosecuted for war crimes.

Ratner's group, the Center for Constitutional Rights, filed a criminal complaint in Germany against Rumsfeld, Attorney General Alberto Gonzales and former CIA Director George Tenet on behalf of 12 Iraqi and Saudi who had been allegedly abused at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay by their American captors.

"There has to be some accountability for Donald Rumsfeld," Ratner told Bloomberg News.

Funny, that's what many Brooklynites are saying about his brother.

— Gersh Kuntzman

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See your CB chair with a lampshade on his head!

By Dana Rubinstein

The Brooklyn Papers

The holiday season is upon us, and that means one thing: it's time to party, Community Board style.

Brooklyn's community boards are celebrating the holidays in ways as diverse as the neighborhoods they represent — some

are planning absolutely nothing, others are planning to raise the roof. Here's how your community board measures up.

• Community Board 2, which covers Fort Greene, DUMBO, Clinton Hill, Boerum Hill, and Brooklyn Heights, isn't doing much of anything.

"We do a small reception after the full board meeting on

Dec. 13," said District Manager Rob Peris. "There'll be cheese and crackers and cruties."

• Community Board 6, which encompasses Red Hook, Carroll Gardens, Park Slope, Gowanus, and Cobble Hill, will eschew the raw vegetables in favor of a "Whiz-Bang Blowout Holiday Extravaganza" at Park Slope's Union Hall.

"Whiz-bang," of course, refers to explosives used during World War I, but we're assured that this party has no military theme.

District Manager Craig Hammerman promises that there will be peaceful activities like bocce-playing, door-prize giveaways, hors d'oeuvre-eating, and plenty of drinking at the cash bar.

And here's a bonus:

If you get tired of seeing CB 6 chairman Jerry Amerer with a lampshade on his head, you can head to the Union Hall basement where Jane magazine is having its own holiday shindig.

• Neither Community Board 10, which represents Bay Ridge and Dyker Heights, nor Community Board 11, which represents Bensonhurst, is hosting an open party.

"We have a very small staff

and the board members have so many other things to do, we didn't want another obligation for them," explained Howard Feuer, the district manager for CB11.

CB 10's 50 members and their significant others will party at an undisclosed location — but this source is so exclusive that it's "invite only," said District Manager Josephine Beckmann.

Community Board 2 holiday "party" Dec. 13, 6 pm, St. Francis College's Founder's Hall (180 Remsen St., between Clinton and Court streets). Call (718) 596-5410 for information.

Community Board 6 holiday party Dec. 20, 6 pm, Union Hall (702 Union St., between Fifth and Sixth avenues). Tickets \$30. For information, call (718) 643-3027.



Brooklyn was burning

At least one fire on Thanksgiving night was caused by something other than a turkey fry gone wrong. A tire shop at the corner of Fourth and Prospect avenues in Park Slope went up in flames just before midnight on Nov. 23. Approximately 60 firefighters responded to the blaze, which was brought under control in an hour, fire officials said. There were no injuries and the cause of the fire is still under investigation.

— Christie Rizk

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Dr. Patrick Borgen joined us from Memorial Sloan-Kettering where he was the Director of the Breast Cancer Disease Management Team. Dr. Borgen is a member of the prestigious Peer Review Board of *The Journal of the American Medical Association*.

Dr. Jay Cooper was at New York University School of Medicine where he was

Director of Radiation Oncology. He has authored two landmark studies on the combined effects of radiation and chemotherapy in certain cancers. He sits on the editorial boards of three journals.

Dr. Alan Astrow was the Chief of Clinical Oncology and Program Director at St. Vincent's Hospital, Manhattan. His major research interests include chemotherapy of gynecological cancers and chemotherapy of HIV-related malignancies. Dr. Astrow has published and lectured extensively on issues related to hematology.

Dr. Joseph LoCicero comes to Maimonides from the University of Southern Alabama, where he served as Chairman of the Dept. of Surgery and Chief of Surgical Oncology. He has taught at Harvard and Northwestern Universities and is co-editor of the leading medical textbook, *General Thoracic Surgery*.

Dr. Bernadine Donahue joins us from New York

University where she was Director of Radiation Neuro-Oncology and Program Director for the Radiation Oncology Residency. She serves on the editorial boards of *Radiology*, *Pediatrics*, and *The Journal of Neuro-Oncology*.

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The Brooklyn Papers' essential guide to the Borough of Kings

December 2, 2006

Shades of 'Gray'

Park Slope writer-director's gay romantic comedy attracts star-power

By Marian Masone
for The Brooklyn Papers

There are many fields in the film industry where one can make a really good living: there's editing, cinematography and, of course, writing.

But it seems as though what everyone really wants to do is direct. And this is where chances are taken.

Park Slope writer Sue Kramer has made a career of penning screenplays; it can be a lucrative field, whether or not one's script ever gets produced. However, success in one arena is no guarantee of success in another.

"I was the poorest I've ever been [while I was] trying to direct a movie," Kramer told GO Brooklyn at a cafe across the street from a cinema in tony East Hampton. So getting her first writing-and-directorial effort made — and selected for October's Hamptons International Film Festival — was no small feat.

The Hamptons festival, which showcases approximately 100 films, programmed Kramer's first narrative feature film, "Gray Matters," in its Spotlight section, a part of the fest reserved for films with celebrated names attached to them. In this case, the boldface names include stars like Heather Graham ("Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me," "Boogie Nights"), Molly Shannon ("Superstar," "Saturday Night Live") and Tom Cavanagh (CBS's "Love Monkey," NBC's "Ed").

Graham plays Gray, an advertising executive who discovers, on the eve of the wedding of her brother (played by Cavanagh), that she might just be gay. Shannon is the best friend and co-worker with all the best lines. ("Molly Shannon is me!" Kramer revealed.)

When Kramer introduced her romantic comedy at its premiere screening in Southampton (where Graham, Shannon and Cavanagh were all in attendance), she explained that the seeds of inspiration came from her sister Carolyn.

When asked how close her sister's experiences as a gay woman were to the character of Gray in the film, Kramer said that, while it's not a full representation of her life, "I wanted to convey the idea of making sense of who you are."

Behind the scenes
While writing, shooting and editing the film was a two-year-long process, getting to the point where she was able to make the film was a bit more arduous for Kramer. Having graduated from UCLA's film school might have given her a leg up, but she still had to work to make "Gray Matters" a reality. She wrote and sold screenplays, and she apprenticed as an editor on "NYPD Blue." But even with her writing and editing credits, Kramer said she waged a six-year-long campaign trying to convince a people with the purse strings that she was up to directing a film.

It became easier as some heavy hitters attached themselves to the project. When Alexander Payne (director of "Sideways" and "Election") became an executive producer of the film, others followed. Kramer had previously worked with Sissy Spacek on a book called "Last Innocent Summer," but when the star of "Carrie" came on-board as



Toasting her success: "Gray Matters," written and directed by Sue Kramer of Park Slope, stars Heather Graham (above right) as Gray and Bridget Moynihan as Charlie. (At left) Actress Molly Shannon, Kramer and Graham celebrated the film's inclusion in the Hamptons International Film Festival at a party on Gin Lane hosted by Ann Barish on Oct. 20.

Gray's obnoxious shrink, it gave Kramer a stamp of approval.

But Spacek is more than a colleague to Kramer.

"Her family are very close and dear to me," explained the first-time director.

After that, Kramer was on a roll, and sometimes kissed played a part. Her film opens with Graham and Cavanagh's characters dancing to Irving Berlin's classic "Check to Check," but anyone with the smallest bit of smarts about the Berlin estate knows that getting the rights to use his music is practically impossible. So how did she do it?

Kramer had always planned to use the song in the film, but she had no idea how to make it happen. Luckily, her co-producer, Rachel Peters, just happened to be Berlin's granddaughter.

Although the interiors for the film were shot in Vancouver, most exterior shots were done in the summer of 2005 in New York, and Kramer says, "I proudly call myself a New York filmmaker."

Let's talk about sex
But this Brooklyn filmmaker has an agenda that's bigger than New York City.

Her "Gray Matters" script is multi-layered, covering all the gray areas that Kramer sees in the world.

"There were a lot of things I wanted to say, and I think comedy is the best way to say it. Sexuality, body image, prejudice; if you bring levity to it, you can hit deeper."

"Society says you're never good enough; society says be whoever you want to be, but we won't really approve of it [and] just don't try to get married or get benefits."

Speaking of society, the Hamptons film festival is well attended by society of the high type and the parties are a must. There are essentially two kinds of soirees: loud, noisy bashes at the seemingly unending supply of clubs, or more intimate gatherings at the homes of various festival board members, where the artwork alone is worth a fortune.

The party after the Hamptons screening of "Gray Matters" was, happily, of the latter type, in the oceanfront home of board member Ann Barish, who also introduced the film.

"At the party, people of every age came up to me: 10-year-olds loved it, and 70-year-olds loved it," recalled Kramer. Aside from a sneak preview of the film at the Outfest in Los Angeles, the Hamptons screening was really the world premiere as far as Kramer's concerned. And the film arrived

on the East Coast with distribution plans in place; the Yari Film Group ("Crash") will open the film in February — right around Valentine's Day.

'A family affair'

That a story like this can have a life beyond film festival screenings should make her sister Carolyn proud. When asked if Carolyn had seen the film, Kramer told GO Brooklyn that her sister was a part of the crew. Her sibling acted as wardrobe mistress and nanny for Kramer's baby daughter on the set, among other duties. Since then she's showed up for the opening, and seems to be the film's biggest cheerleader.

While making the film, Kramer was trying to get pregnant, so she wound up on set with a five-month-old baby, but the filmmaker believes that women can do everything — with planning and the correct choices.

"It was a family affair," she said. "I'm trying to attack the stigma that women can't do it all."

Kramer thinks they can, and she's out to prove it.

For more information about Sue Kramer and "Gray Matters," visit the Web site, www.graymattersmovie.com.

Marian Masone is a member of the Film Society of Lincoln Center and the Museum of Modern Art's "New Directors/New Films" selection committee and is the associate director of programming for the Film Society of Lincoln Center.

CHARITY



Zanes-y video

On an overcast morning in October, in front of a brownstone in Cobble Hill, passersby were surprised to see a dozen young kids, two trumpets, one trombone, an upright bass, two flutes, percussion instruments, two saxophones, a large cow, two piggy goats, a sheep, a llama and some cameras.

Standing in the midst of this odd tableau — holding an acoustic guitar and sporting a wild orange suit and a huge smile — was musician Dan Zanes, who was shooting a video for his new song, "Holiday Time in Brooklyn."

"Dan has always been very involved in charity and in the community," said Zanes's publicist Brian Shinkovitz, explaining the former Del Fuegos frontman's latest stunt.

For this gig, Zanes teamed up with Heifer International, an organization that strives to end world hunger by encouraging donors to supply suffering people in 128 countries with livestock, a sustainable source of food (as opposed to merely giving short-term relief). For example, a goat, which provides a family with numerous quarts of milk, costs \$120.

With the holidays approaching, Heifer International wanted a siren call to reawaken charitable spirits and reached out to Zanes for help.

So Dan wrote "Holiday Time in Brooklyn," to be used as an e-card to publicize Heifer International's mission. The card was sent to past donors and is now on the Heifer International Web site for all to see.

Getting the kids to sing, play, record and make a video with this renowned, Grammy-nominated children's musician — author of several albums including "House Party" and the recently released "Catch That Train" — was the easy part.

"They just love him," said Roy Nathanson, member of the Jazz Passengers and long time friend of Zanes, as he watched his eight-year-old Gabriel proudly playing his trumpet. "To them, he's like the Beatles."

And just in case Zanes alone wasn't incentive enough to attract some kid musicians, the Heifer International video producers had a back-up plan: exotic animals.

"I had never seen a llama before," said Sammy Boyle, a trumpeter in the sixth grade. "It's so cool!"

Zanes's song ended with the question: "It's holiday time in Brooklyn, what can you give?"

Perhaps this year, the answer might just be: a chicken, a rabbit, or even a cow.

To watch the "Holiday Time in Brooklyn" video and for more information about Heifer International, visit their Web site, www.heifer.org, or call (800) 422-0474.

— Giacomo Maniscalco

BOOKS

'Talk' is cheap

Enjoy a free evening of readings by contributors to the NY Writers Coalition's first anthology, "If These Streets Could Talk," on Tuesday in Park Slope.

The Hanson Place-based not-for-profit organization, helmed by Executive Director Aaron Zimmerman, has been offering free creative writing workshops throughout the city, including Bedford-Stuyvesant, Park Slope and Fort Greene, for the last five years. This paperback is a collection of fiction and poetry from the workshops' participants.

The fruits of their labors confront birth and death and everything in between. Jude David's poem "Wings No Passport" reads: "I arrived without fanfare, also without fortune/ Being born was my parents' idea" while Nelson Figueroa's "Out of the Chamber" opens: "I have AIDS/ Death looms near/ Basic situations/ Take on perverse interpretations/ Strapped down on an MRI sled/ Apprehensions, visions of cremation — hell fires —/ Form in my pre-procedure/ Countdown to God knows/ What they are looking for."

Contributors to "If These Streets Could Talk: Fiction & Poetry from NY Writers Coalition" (NY Writers Coalition Press, \$15) will read on Dec. 5 at 7:30 p.m. at the Community Bookstore (143 Seventh Ave. at Garland Street in Park Slope). For more information, call (718) 783-3075 or visit the Web site www.nywriterscoalition.org.

— Lisa J. Curtis

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100 Wine Tips

Corked!

By Darrin Siegfried

Just imagine the response, if the whole wine industry had been using screw-tops for generations and some bright spark popped up to tell us there was this great new thing called cork. Of course, it means that about ten per cent of wine will be tainted, there will be dulled fruit flavors, musty odors and problems and variation in wines as they age. But hey, it makes a great sound when you pull it out of the bottle!

New Zealand wine writer Bob Campbell asked that in a book I've been reading about corks called "Screwed", by Tyson Stetler. There are many problems with corks as closures for wine bottles, and I'd like to address a few of them today. The wine industry has known about these problems since corks were first used, in the late 1600s. That there has not been, until recently, an acceptable alternative is the only acceptable reason for the silence. With the acceptance of screw caps, there are fewer spoiled wines on the market, yet many people insist on buying only wines finished with a cork.

Corks serve two purposes: to keep the wine in, and to keep air, dirt and other undesirable items out of the bottle. Because cork is made from the bark of an oak, specifically known as Cork Oak, it is a living thing and has flaws and imperfections which can lead to trouble. Most often, these problems can be divided into three areas: Taint, oxidation, and bottle variation. Let's look closer.

Taint occurs when bacteria contaminates the cork and reproduces in the bottle. Wines thus affected are said to be "corked". The most common chemical compound that this interaction creates is 2,4,6-trichloroanisole, and this gives the infected wine its distinct "corky" smell. At first, these wines become dull in flavor, and the fruit tastes simply disappear. At the next step of affliction, the tell-tale smells emerge typically described as the smell of a damp, dirty cellar, or old, musty newspapers, or moldering cork. The wine will usually have these unpleasant flavors on the palate, as well.

Some people are more sensitive to the signs of corked wine than others, and some are simply unaware that what is called wine really is "off". I have gone to wine tastings where dozens of people, all in the wine business, have sampled a corked bottle and none has picked up on it. If you believe that your wine is corked but you are not sure, ask someone else to smell and taste the wine. In a restaurant, refuse the corked bottle, and insist on another.

Wine oxidizes when it comes into contact with air, and a sherry-like aroma and flavor becomes apparent. When a cork shrinks its seal is broken and wine can exit the bottle while air enters, allowing oxidation to occur. Since corks shrink when they become dry, wine bottles are stored on their sides or upside down in order to keep the cork wet. Wine corks are kept at 50-60% humidity to keep the corks from drying out. (Higher humidity won't hurt the corks, but will encourage the growth of mold and mildew, staining the labels on your bottles.)

It has often been said that there are no great vintages, only great bottles. This is because of the wide variation from bottle to bottle which older wines show. Even wines stored alongside one another, untouched, in the same cellar will quite often look, smell and taste quite different from bottle to bottle. One may be alive, vibrant, full flavored and brilliant. The next lifeless and flat. The third, muddled and undrinkable. The only thing different when these bottles left the winery were the individual corks. Nothing else could contribute to such wide variations in the condition of the wine.

Taint, oxidation, bottle variation, leakage, plus other problems such as "woadiness" or "dusty corkiness", which is not actually taint... put them together and then add in long-celled wines (wines kept for longer than 15 years) which often "fall" at a rate of over 30%, and it is easy to understand claims that at least 10% of wine is damaged by the cork. This is the main reason why we are seeing more wines sealed with screw cap closures.

A tainted cork does not mean that your wine is bad or spoiled. Often in the winery corks are placed into bottles too-full with wine. Slowly, over a few days or weeks, some wine will leak out of the bottle until the pressure is more neutralized. Since these bottles are stored upside down or on their sides, the cork will be stained. After years as a Sommelier, opening thousands of bottles, my professional advice is this: the only way to tell if your wine is good or if it is spoiled is to pour some into a glass. Swirl the wine to coat the sides of the glass. Look at the color. Is the wine clear or muddy? Is the color correct, or has your red wine turned brown? Smell it. Clear dirty? Appealing or off? If it smells as if the wine is sound, sip it. Move it around in your mouth, even chew it. You'll know if the wine is good or not. Perfectly good wine may have a rotten cork, while badly corked wine is most often sealed with a flawless cork. Sniffing the cork is useless. Use your senses. If the wine is bad, send it back and try again... and, when you see a screw cap, breathe a sigh of relief.



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One Big Easy

NoNo Kitchen's north of New Orleans cuisine is welcome newcomer to Park Slope

By Tina Barry
for The Brooklyn Papers

There's a whiff of Bourbon Street on Park Slope's Seventh Avenue. The dreary India House has closed, and in its place is NoNo Kitchen, a Louisiana-style eatery with a setting meant to "Laissez Les Bon Temps Rouler" — or "let the good times roll."

Gregory Tatis, the chef and co-owner of NoNo Kitchen, and his wife, pastry chef Monica Jaramillo-Tatis, opened the restaurant in October. Before coming to Park Slope, Tatis was the executive chef of the Delta Grill in Manhattan. He worked for eight years with the man who brought everything "blackened" to New York in the late 80s, Paul Prudhomme of K-Paul's Louisiana Kitchen in New Orleans. A photo of Prudhomme hangs in the restaurant.

If diners can get past the restaurant's name — which seems more like an omen than an inviting moniker (NoNo is an abbreviation of "north of New Orleans") — they can have an enjoyable meal in a lively room. Long, etched glass windows facing Seventh Avenue have the frosty look of thin ice. The ceiling is high and tint covered, and wooden tables line the space from front to back. At night, with the music bouncing off the ceiling, the screams of laughter and subdued conversation, NoNo can have a theme park feeling.

I prefer the ambience at lunch, when the sun-filled space has a sleepy, lulling serenity.

Since its start, the dinner service has been packed. With an onslaught of customers, the kitchen hasn't had time to perfect certain dishes or edit down the menu. However, patrons who order carefully will be rewarded with a completely spiced, soul-satisfying meal. But there are clunkers among the dishes.

The "blue crab cake" holds together by sheer willpower; it's 95 percent jumbo lump crabmeat, delicately spiced and accompanied by a subtly fishy, tangy remoulade (a French, mayonnaise-based sauce that's flavored with mustard, gherkins, herbs and anchovies). It's the



Out ouit: NoNo Kitchen chef-owner Gregory Tatis (above) offers up a bowl of jambalaya at his Seventh Avenue restaurant. His menu includes a top-notch "blue crab cake" (at left).

king of crab cakes. I could have eaten 50 of the oysters. Each plump little mollusk is dipped in corn flour and fried to a crunch, just

salty-enough deliciousness with every bite swish in the mineral brines of the ocean. They're deep fried into a slightly sweet apple and caramelized onion tartar sauce.

The smoked duck and crackling gumbo, one of three gumbo on the

DINING

NoNo Kitchen (293 Seventh Ave. between Seventh and Eighth streets in Park Slope) accepts American Express, MasterCard and Visa. Entrees: \$16-\$24. The restaurant serves lunch and dinner daily. Brunch is available on weekends, from 10 am to 4 pm. Take the F train to Seventh Avenue. For reservations, call (718) 369-8348.

menu, arrived barely warm. In addition, the stew, which should be one of the restaurant's signature dishes, was overseasoned and its spices barely surfaced on the palate.

At lunch, a huge bowl of jambalaya, made with tender, dark-meat chicken, slices of spicy pork andouille sausage, chorizo and tasso ham helped me forget the gumbo. The menu warns diners: "this dish is spicy!" And the jambalaya is spicy — at first bite. A few minutes later, my palate had adjusted, and I wished its seasoning was a bit hotter.

One nearly perfect item on the menu, and a lovely starter to the meal, is a basket of warm cornbread. The crusty little loaves were slightly sweet at dinner one night, and just barely so at lunch. I prefer the less sweet version. Either way, the bread makes joyful eating when smeared with butter.

So does Nono's macaroni and cheese, which is the best on this side of the Mason-Dixon Line. You'll love Tatis's traditional take if you're into creamy mac and cheese, rather than the dense, loaf-like style. This version is a mix of Brie and sharp cheddar with mild cheddar creating a chewy, crispy top hat.

Two of the entrees we sampled are disappointing. Heavy butter overwhelmed the delicate "trout meuniere amandine," that couldn't be rescued by sides of lush mashed potatoes and crisp, sauteed squash and string beans.

"Monday's Red Beans and Rice" is a washout. The beans and grain are perfectly tender but lack any discernible spices, and the boneless fried chicken breast that keeps the duo company is about as exciting as a slice of Wonder Bread. This is one dish that makes a whole lot of love from the chef.

Jaramillo-Tatis's bread pudding, studded with chocolate and raisins, comes topped with a sauce (butter, powdered sugar and a touch of orangey Grand Marnier) that melts over the top. Tatis says that the sauce is a typical Prudhomme touch. It gives the dessert a homesy spin, but it seems like a missed opportunity to contrast something cold, like a scoop of vanilla ice cream, with the warm, custardy bread.

The coffee, blended with chicory, was strong and rich.

With the opening of the vibrant NoNo Kitchen, we're reminded of what New Orleans once was and the long journey still ahead to restore its streets and spirit.

Hat trick

Windsor Terrace has great housing stock, proximity to Prospect Park and friendly neighbors, but only a few good places to eat. That's why the new Fez Restaurant on Prospect Park West is so special. The eatery, which opened on Aug. 14, brings fully realized Moroccan fare to the area and offers it up in an attractive dining room and lovely backyard garden.

Restaurateur Bahija Elmourabit is a familiar fixture in the vicinity. She owns the tiny 16th Street Gourmet, a takeout counter that is just around the corner from her new eatery and is temporarily closed. (Elmourabit was also the proprietor and chef at Marrakech in Carroll Gardens, which she closed in June.)

The chef-owner is offering an extensive menu that includes a rich chicken tagine with apricots and prunes as well as vegetarian couscous (at right), and several beautifully seasoned dips and

salads. Stop in for her three-course lunch special (a steal at \$8) and eat it slowly in the dining room with its soft gold walls and mismatched tablecloths. The setting makes a warm respite from the busy street outside.

When the weather warms, diners can enjoy a meal beneath an umbrella-topped table on the flower-filled patio. Until spring, when she expects her license for wine and beer, diners can bring their own bottles without a corkage fee.

Fez Restaurant (240 Prospect Park West between Windsor Place and Prospect Avenue in Windsor Terrace) accepts American Express, Discover, MasterCard and Visa. Lunch specials: \$8 for three courses; entrees: \$7-\$16. The restaurant serves lunch and dinner daily. Brunch is available on weekends, from 10 am to 3 pm. For more information, call (718) 369-0716.

— Tina Barry



A perfect match

Park Slope video artist uses cutting-edge medium to pay homage to evolving borough

By Marian Masone
for The Brooklyn Papers

The Brooklyn skyline has been changing for years, but now everyone is taking notice.

On Dec. 3, Adam Kendall, a Park Slope-based video artist and curator, aims to capture the borough's current landscapes in a new and ingenious way before they all fall before the wrecking ball with "vBrooklyn," a one-night video festival at the Galapagos Art Space in Williamsburg that will include music and performance art.

Okay, so not everything is falling, but many buildings are disappearing. The look of our borough will soon change radically; there's no denying that. Whereas it took certain Manhattan areas — SoHo comes to mind — a generation to turn from an artists' colony to a shopping mall, in Brooklyn the transformation is taking place in much less time. From Atlantic Yards to Coney Island, massive development projects are on the table.

Kendall has lived in Brooklyn for almost 20 years, and so he has seen the changes first-hand. As an artist, he's also seen the transformation of video art into a digital medium encompassing many forms of moving image in combination with music as well as live performance.

With the "vBrooklyn" festival, he aims to bring a changing art form and a changing cityscape together. And he sees it as a perfect match.

"Video art, like Brooklyn, has been going through a renaissance," Kendall told GO Brooklyn. "With changes in technology and the interest

excluded anyone with an overt political message, but it is not the purpose of the festival."

His aim was to explore the idea of place, and most of the artists seem to be on the same page. Places to be explored will include the Gowanus Canal, Floyd Bennett Field, as well as the Brooklyn waterfront and various landmark structures.

Kendall told GO Brooklyn that this festival has been two years in the making. He put out an open call for artists and spent time researching those whose work he wasn't familiar with. Yet, in the end, he already knew most of the artists in the show.

"Most of the artists live or have lived in Brooklyn," said Kendall, and this makes sense. How do you ask an artist from California to come to New York and capture the essence of this complex borough? Each media artist was asked to document, in her or his own way, various aspects of Brooklyn. Much of the work will be new, created specifically for "vBrooklyn," but in some cases, an artist's older video may speak directly to the subject.

Other pieces — specifically Andy Graydon's "Conductant" and Bruce Tovsky's performance piece "Underpass" — will revise pre-existing work especially for "vBrooklyn." In fact, Kendall himself will do a video per-



Going, going gone?: In "vBrooklyn," a video and performing arts event coming to the Galapagos Art Space on Sunday, artists feature the borough's skyline as it is, was and wish it could be.

formance that evening that will most likely incorporate footage he shot a while back.

Many pieces will incorporate live performance. (Since most of the work is new — that is, not yet finished or will be performed live — nothing was available to GO for advance screening.) Kendall did show us a work-in-progress of what he calls "vBrooklyn Interstitials," an undulating, dream-like view of the borough that will be used as a background between the evening's three distinct sections — one "set" of videos and two of live performance.

With this, "the screen will never be dark," according to Kendall. Musicians will also be represented, among them Elliot Sharp as well as Stephen Moore and Scott Smallwood of Evidence.

Other participating artists include Benton-C Bainbridge, Elle Burchill,

Naval Cassidy, Karl Chumell, Christopher Curtin, Luke Dellois, Madeleine Gallagher, Giles Hendrix, Janene Higgins, Chika Iijima, Bettina Johae, Chris Jordan, Leif Krinkle, David Last, Zach Layton, Anton Marini and Elizabeth Smolarz.

Among the sponsors of "vBrooklyn" is Forward Motion Theater, a Manhattan-based dance-theater-media organization. As part of their support for the project, Forward Motion will take care of the entire technical set-up (no small feat), as well as documenting the event to create an experimental — yet historical — record, a way to save some of Brooklyn as it was, as it is now, and as it might have been.

Marian Masone is the associate director of programming for the Film Society of Lincoln Center (FSLC) and chief curator of FSLC's annual "Scanners: The New York Video Festival."

CINEMA

"vBrooklyn: A Video Festival about Brooklyn as a Place and Video as an Artform" will take place Dec. 3, from 7 pm to 11 pm, at Galapagos Art Space (70 N. 6th St. between Kent and Wythe avenues in Williamsburg). Admission is \$5. For more information, call (718) 782-5188 or visit www.vbrooklyn.org.

of artists, video is more and more a part of everyday cultural events and nightlife, and is understood much more by audiences."

This fits in with the changes the borough is going through, but he insists "vBrooklyn" is not making a political statement.

"vBrooklyn" is apolitical by design," said Kendall. "It's not pro-development, nor is it anti-development. It does not condemn or applaud the changes. Artists were free to choose their subject matter. I wouldn't have

Dramatic gifts



The Brooklyn Academy of Music has just announced its slate of dance, theater, pop music and opera performances for its "2007 Spring Season," and the revelations come just in time to thrill those tough-to-buy-for-folks on your holiday list.

For its spring lineup, which spans Feb. 7 to May 27, BAM presents 10 events in the Howard Gilman Opera House and the Harvey Theater. The season starts with The Hamburg Ballet's first Brooklyn appearance in over 20 years, the local premiere of its adaptation of Thomas Mann's novella "Death in Venice." The production, which features music of Bach and Wagner, will be staged Feb. 7–10 in the opera house.

Among the other dance programs, it's

choreographer Matthew Bourne's "Edward Scissorhands" — yes, it's based on the bizarrely sweet Tim Burton film starring Johnny Depp — that's the most anticipated. "Edward Scissorhands" will take the opera house stage March 14–31.

Shakespeare again dominates the spring theatrical offerings. Edward Hall's all-male ensemble Propeller returns to Fort Greene for a three-week residency (March 17–April 1) of the Bard's comedies "The Taming of the Shrew" and "Twelfth Night" in the Harvey Theater.

Also returning is the acclaimed troupe Cheek by Jowl, which last appeared at BAM in 2004 with "Othello." This time, they bring one of Shakespeare's most complex creations, "Cymbeline," to the

Harvey Theater May 2–12.

Musical events run the gamut from a Belgian production of Mozart's "The Magic Flute" (pictured), playing April 9–14 in the opera house, to a performance by Brooklyn Heights resident Mos Def on Feb. 16 and 17 in the opera house.

A special BAM engagement next September has also been announced: the Royal Shakespeare Company productions of "King Lear" (with Ian McKellan) and Chekhov's "The Seagull."

Subscription tickets to the Brooklyn Academy of Music's "2007 Spring Season," which spans Feb. 7 to May 27, go on sale Dec. 4. For more information, call (718) 636-4100 or visit the Web site www.bam.org. — Kevin Filipski

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A Cantor's Tale (2006)

Saturday, December 9th, 8pm
Directed by: Eric Greenberg Anjou
Running time: 95 min
Admission \$5

The tradition of Eastern European Jewish cantorial music is alive and well in modern America in no small part thanks to the efforts of Brooklyn-born Cantor Jacob Mendelson. Explore the American roots of "hasidic" (Jewish liturgical music) while taking a musical voyage that spans the Atlantic. This feature-length documentary provides a nostalgic journey through Jewish neighborhoods and traditions. It also treats us to appearances by renowned cantors and aficionados Joseph Maloney, Ben-Zion Miller, Alleva Mizrahi, Matthew Lazar, Neil Shiff, Jackie Maon and Alan Derbowitz.

Followed by a Q&A with the filmmaker

everybody welcome.
for more information or to make a reservation, please contact levana:
718.596.4840 ext. 18

Protocols of Zion (2004)

Saturday, December 9th, 8pm
Directed by: Marc Levin
Running time: 95 min
Suggested donation \$5

Marc Levin gives us an explosive exploration of resurgent anti-Semitism in the wake of September 11th. Levin's film draws its inspiration from an encounter he had in a New York taxi not long after 9/11, in which his driver, an Egyptian immigrant, made the disturbing claim that the Jews had been warned not to go to work at the World Trade Center on the day of the attack. He then said that "it all writers in the book, The Protocols of the Elders of Zion." Levin engages in a free-for-all dialogue with Arab Americans, Black nationalists, Christian evangelists and White supremacists. Levin's confrontational conversations form a probing and provocative portrait of our so-called modern civilization caught in the grips of a most ancient hatred.

Followed by a Q&A with Simcha Weinstein (former associate of the British Film commission)

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December 2, 2006

Where to Go

Compiled by Susan Rosenthal Jay

Sat, Dec 2

OUTDOORS AND TOURS

DISCOVERY TOUR: Explore the secrets of nature with naturalists from the Prospect Park Audubon Center. 3 pm to 4 pm. Enter park at Lincoln Road and Ocean Avenue. (718) 287-3400. Free.

FLATBUSH WALK: Brooklyn Center for the Urban Environment hosts a tour. \$11, 39 members, \$8 seniors and students, 2 pm to 4 pm. Meet at Church Avenue and East 18th Street. (718) 788-8500.

WALKING TOUR: Mauricio Lorence hosts the Metro Tour. Service and takes a walk through Fort Greene, Clinton Hill and Brooklyn Heights. \$25, 2 pm to 5 pm. Meet at Marriott Hotel Brooklyn, 333 Adams St. (718) 789-0430.

ICE SKATING: The Wolman Rink is open. \$5, \$3 seniors and children, \$5.50 skate rental. 10 am to 1 pm, 2 pm to 6 pm, 7 pm to 10 pm. Prospect Park. Best accessed through Parkside/Ocean avenues entrance or the Lincoln Road/Ocean Avenue entrance. (718) 287-5252.

PERFORMANCE

NEXT WAVE: Brooklyn Academy of Music presents Isen's "Hedda Gabler," directed by Thomas Ostermeier. Performed in German with English titles. \$20 to \$60, 2 pm and 7:30 pm. BAM Harvey Theater, 651 Fulton St. Also, "Red, Hot and Riot Live! The Music and Spirit of Fela Kuti." Program celebrates the music of the late Afrobeat king, Nigerian musician Fela Kuti. \$25 to \$65, 7:30 pm. BAM Howard Gilman Opera House, 30 Lafayette Ave. (718) 636-4100.

WINTER CONCERT: Long Island University presents a program, 2 pm and 8 pm. Kumbale Theater, 1 University Place. Call for ticket info. (718) 488-1624.

COMEDY: Billie Holiday Theater presents the comedy "Steal Away," \$20, \$12 children and seniors, 8 pm. 1348 Fulton St. (718) 636-0918.

ST. ANN'S WAREHOUSE: presents "Woysack," a rock-infused, politically minded piece. \$35, 8 pm. 38 Water St. (718) 254-8779.

GALLERY PLAYERS: presents the classic comedy "Torch Song Trilogy," \$15, \$14 children and seniors, 8 pm. 199 14th St. (718) 352-3103.

ROMEO AND JULIET: Brooklyn Conservatory Community Orchestra explores "The Many Faces of Romeo and Juliet." Works to be performed include Tchaikovsky's "Romeo and Juliet" and more. 8 pm. Middle School 51, 350 Fifth Ave. (718) 622-3300.

DANCE SAMPLER: BRIC hosts a showcase featuring works from 10 companies, schools, and groups. \$15, 8 pm. 57 Rockwell Pl. 2nd floor. (718) 633-5678.

CHILDREN

ART MAKING: Brooklyn Museum hosts "Arty Facts." Explore the galleries, enjoy family activity and create art based on "Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes." Appropriate for ages 4 to 7. \$5 ticket, free for kids ages 12 and younger and members. 11 am and 2 pm. 200 Eastern Parkway. (718) 638-5000.

GALLERY PLAYERS: Freestyle Repertory Theater performs. Individual seats are based on audience suggestions. \$8 kids, parents free. 11 am. 199 14th St. (718) 595-0547, ext. 6.

FAMILY FEST: Brooklyn Arts Exchange pres-



Toy story: Brooklyn Center for the Performing Arts presents The Dance Theater of Westchester's production of "The Nutcracker" at the Brooklyn College's Walt Whitman Theatre in Midwood on Dec. 3 at 2 pm.

Red Hook Initiative: 595 Clinton St. (718) 780-1234. Free.

OPEN STUDIO: Viewing of recently completed works by Simon Dierstein: "The Palette Paintings." 1 pm to 7 pm. 415 First St. (718) 788-6287. Free.

LECTURE: Green-Wood Cemetery presents James Barron who discusses his book "Piano: The Making of a Stairway Concert Grand." Lecture is followed by a walk to the Stierman family mausoleum. 1 pm. Fifth Avenue and 25th Street. (718) 763-7300. Free.

ENCAUSTIC OPEN STUDIO: Artworks by Linda Marston-Reed are encaustics, pieces created using an ancient Roman painting process with wax. 1 pm to 6 pm. 35 Clever Pl. between Franklin and Clason avenues. (347) 228-9574. Free.

HOLIDAY GREENS: Brooklyn Botanic Garden offers a class on creating holiday decorations. Make a swag, wreath and/or centerpiece out of pine and fir and then decorate with a variety of natural materials. \$85, \$75 members, 2 pm to 5 pm. 1000 Washington Ave. (718) 623-7200.

BROOKLYN WRITERS: Alicia Erian discusses her debut novel, "Towhead," about 13-year-old Jasira, a half-Lebanese girl sent to live with a father she barely knew. 2 pm. Brooklyn Public Library, Central branch, Second Floor Meeting Room, Grand Army Plaza. (718) 230-2100. Free.

RAW FOOD: Learn how to prepare raw food at Radiant Health. Today's topic: con-

OTHER

FIRST SATURDAY: Experience Fantastic Reality at the Brooklyn Museum. Activities include holiday music, family art-making and dance party. Also, holiday storytelling with Robin Brady; a gallery talk by the museum's Deputy Director for Art, Charles Desmarais; and a screening of Hitchcock's "The Birds." 5 pm to 11 pm. Brooklyn Museum, 200 Eastern Parkway. (718) 638-5000. Free.

RED HOOK HWY AIDS DAY: Awareness Day features community organizations that have collaborated to offer HIV testing, educational workshops and outreach. 10 am to 5:30 pm. Testing offered at South Brooklyn Health Center, 120 Richards St. (mobile unit) Sponsored by the Community Health Network and the

Red Hook Initiative, 595 Clinton St. (718) 780-1234. Free.

OPEN STUDIO: Viewing of recently completed works by Simon Dierstein: "The Palette Paintings." 1 pm to 7 pm. 415 First St. (718) 788-6287. Free.

LECTURE: Green-Wood Cemetery presents James Barron who discusses his book "Piano: The Making of a Stairway Concert Grand." Lecture is followed by a walk to the Stierman family mausoleum. 1 pm. Fifth Avenue and 25th Street. (718) 763-7300. Free.

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RAW FOOD: Learn how to prepare raw food at Radiant Health. Today's topic: con-

ents blended drinks and smoothies. \$35, 2 pm to 4:30 pm. 288 Fifth Ave. (917) 975-7120.

SINGLES NIGHT: Oasis Singles hosts a candlelight Christmas celebration. Christmas carol sing-along with all time favorites. \$15, 7 pm. First Evangelical Free Church, 6501 Sixth Ave. (718) 636-0229.

JEWISH FILMS: Brooklyn Heights Jewish Film Festival celebrates documentary films. Today: "A Cantor's Tale" (2006), \$5, 8 pm. 117 Remsen St. (718) 596-4840.

BAMCENMATEK: presents "Red Hot and Riot Live." Today: "Fela Fresh From Africa" (2006), \$10, \$7 children and seniors. Film is screened as a complement to the BAM concert "Red Hot + Riot Live," a tribute to the music of Fela Kuti, 2 pm, 4:30 pm, 6:15 pm and 9:30 pm. (718) 777-ELIM, www.bam.org

HOLIDAY SALES: Greens and Crafts Fair: Artists and crafts persons offer a variety of handmade items for holiday gifts and home decoration. 10 am to 6 pm. Parish Hall of St. Ann and the music of Fela Kuti, 157 Montague St. (718) 875-6960.

CRAPT SALE: Claretine craft sale features pottery, tiles and jewelry, at prices up to 40% below retail. 10 am to 5 pm. 543 Union St. (718) 875-3977.

HOLIDAY SALE: at PS 9 Array of handmade holiday gifts, items, books, toys and more. 10 am to 4 pm. 80 Underhill Ave. (347) 563-5234.

CRAPTS FAIR: PS 39 hosts its annual event featuring food, crafts, kids' crafts and activities and more. 11 am to 6 pm. Seventh Avenue between Fourth and Fifth streets. (718) 763-1889.

Sun, Dec 3

OUTDOORS AND TOURS

AUDUBON CENTER: Prospect Park's Audubon Center offers a talk about the most common winter birds. 8 am. Enter park at Lincoln Road and Ocean Avenue. (718) 287-3400. Free.

ICE SKATING: The Wolman Rink is open. \$5, \$3 seniors and children, \$5.50 skate rental. 10 am to 1 pm and 2 pm to 6 pm. Prospect Park. Best accessed through Parkside/Ocean avenues entrance or the Lincoln Road/Ocean Avenue entrance. (718) 965-8999.

PERFORMANCE

CONCERT SERIES: Music from Good Shepherd series presents Shemana and Aguirre Duo in a program of voice and guitar. Donations encouraged. 6 pm. Good Shepherd Church, Avenue S and Brown Street, Marine Park. (718) 986-2800.

ST. ANN'S WAREHOUSE: "Woysack," 3 pm. See Sat., Dec. 2.

GALLERY PLAYERS: "Torch Song Trilogy," 3 pm. See Sat., Dec. 2.

DANCE SAMPLER: BRIC hosts a showcase. 4:30 pm. See Sat., Dec. 2.

COMEDY: "Steel Lung," 5 pm. See Sat., Dec. 2.

CHILDREN

THE VELVETEN HARBET: Classic story about a toy rabbit and his quest to become real. Presented by the Ridge Repertory Company. Children \$8, adults \$12, 1 pm and 4 pm. Bay Ridge Jewish Center, Fourth Avenue and 81st Street. Call: (718) 836-3103.

FAMILY FEST: Brooklyn Arts Exchange for the Performing Arts presents "The Nutcracker," with the Dance Theater of Westchester. \$12, 2 pm. Walt Whitman Theatre, one block from the intersection of Flatbush and Nostrand avenues. (718) 951-4500.

BROOKLYN CHILDREN'S MUSEUM: hosts "Mealtime Manners with The Berenstain Bears." \$4, free for members and chil-

Continued on page 13...

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Press 195

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Stone Park Cafe

Coney hot for development, cool to housing

By Ariella Cohen
The Brooklyn Papers

Not everyone in Coney Island is anxious to see new housing added to their Parachute Jump-adorned skyline.

In a telephone survey of 400 neighborhood residents, commissioned by developer Joe Sitt, 38 percent of residents said they did not want new housing in Sitt's \$1.5-billion plan to transform Coney Island into a mini-Las Vegas.

But nearly 80 percent of those surveyed by Sitt said they did approve of the notion of turning the busy-in-summer, dead-in-winter neighborhood into a year-round amusement area.

Sitt's latest plans for the rundown stretch of Boardwalk property between West 12th and West 15th streets.

"We've been saying for years that we want to keep the amusements in Coney, not see it get turned into condos," said Chuck Reichenthal, district manager for Community Board 13.

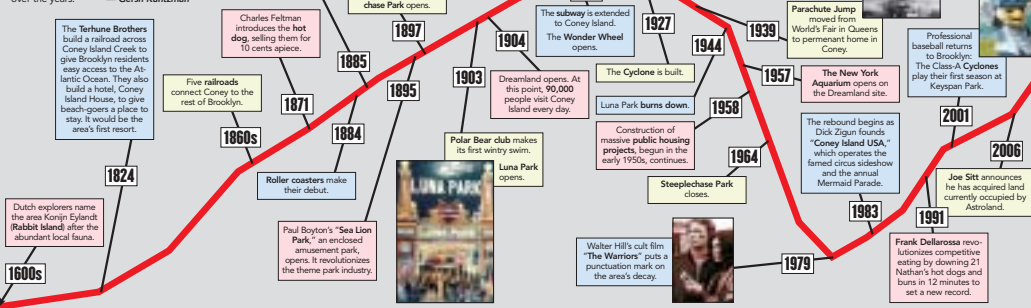
Sitt's latest plans for the Boardwalk development includes four towers, two hotels, time-share condos and at least one apartment building that could rise up to 40 stories.

A spokesman for the developer has said the apartments, which are typically more lucrative than other kinds of development, will pay for the plan's attractions — a 150-foot water slide, the biggest new roller coaster in the city since the Cyclone, and a multilevel carousel (see main story on page 1).

"The problem with amusements is that they don't make money," said Sitt spokesman Lee Silberstein. "They are too expensive and too seasonal and that is part of the reason why we want to do residential."

Coney Island: A timeline

Joe Sitt's plan for a mini-Las Vegas by the Coney Island Boardwalk is just the latest attempt to restore the struggling neighborhood to greatness. Here's how Coney has risen, fallen and risen again over the years: —Gersh Kuntzman



ASTROLAND HISTORY AFTER THIS SUMMER...

Continued from page 1

rebuild Coney Island's world-famous Steeplechase Park, buying seven acres of boardwalk property and the derelict Thunderbolt roller coaster once celebrated by Woody Allen in "Annie Hall."

His plan failed when then-Mayor Giuliani came out against it. Just before Keyspan Park was opened in 2001, the city tore down the Thunderbolt — which was in the line of sight of baseball fans coming to the new stadium — claiming that it was an imminent danger of collapse.

Bullard sold the last piece of his holdings to Sitt in March, trading a Boardwalk property for \$13 million, according to city records.

Now he believes the Gravesend-born developer has a chance of getting it right.

"Just getting all that property from so many small owners is a Herculean feat in Coney Island," Bullard said. "If he can keep the city's support, [the development] could work."

But the most controversial element of the plan — beachfront condos — would require a rezoning from the city, which currently mandates only "amusement" use on all of the Sitt-owned sites.

Bullard is confident that Sitt has the city backing to get the necessary rezoning. "At this point in the city's history, you can't have a carnival and make

money," Bullard said. "You need to have something to bring in profits. Hotels and apartments do that. A theme park isn't in the cards."

Such talk gave one Coney Island legend a stomachache. Top competitor Tim Janus, currently ranked seventh in the world, vowed to organize a hunger strike by competitive eaters to protest the closure of Astroland.

"Where are those rides going to end up?" asked Janus, who regularly participates at the annual Nathan's hot dog-eating contest in Coney Island. "Development is nice but we can't lose that gritty character, the creaky rides, the feel of the place."



The Coney Island boardwalk on Wednesday.

BROOKLYN BRIEFS

Aviator Sports at old airfield

The Brooklyn Papers

Floyd Bennett Field — the one-time airport and high-flying playground for Amelia Earhart and Howard Hughes — is poised to become the sporting hub of Brooklyn.

The newly christened Aviator Sports, scheduled to be fully functional by next week, is the perfect marriage of \$38 million and four formerly defunct airplane hangars. The result: a jock's paradise complete with two ice rinks, a gymnastics center, three basketball courts, two artificial turf football fields, a fitness center, a climbing wall, and, most importantly, a sports bar.

"There really is no other facility like it," said Laura Dugan, an Aviator spokeswoman. "Chelsea Piers is too far away."

Um, Dugan should probably consult her Hagstroms. For many of Aviator's target customers, Chelsea Piers, which is on the West Side Highway between 21st and 23rd streets in Manhattan, is closer than Floyd Bennett Field, which is at the end of Flatbush Avenue, hard by Mill Basin.

To reach Aviator, Brooklynites without wheels would have to take the 2 train to the end of the line, hop on the Q35 for 15 minutes, and then frog-hop across a highway.

"The bulk of our patrons will drive here," said Dugan. "We're trying to work with the city on mass transit, but there are no guarantees."

The good news is that Chelsea Piers's cuisine pales in comparison. Aviator's much-anticipated food court serves up all sorts of decidedly unhealthy fare, from Junior's cheesecake and Jacques Torres chocolate to Grimaldi's pizza.

And the prices might actually be worth the commute. Public skating at Aviator runs \$8 for adults, while Chelsea Piers charges \$11. —Dana Rubinstein

Park backers lose waterfront lawsuit

The Brooklyn Papers

Brooklyn Heights residents who sued to block the state's plan to include condos in the proposed Brooklyn Bridge

Park waterfront development vowed to appeal this week's dismissal of their case. On Tuesday, Brooklyn State Supreme Court Justice Law-

rence Knipel dismissed the opponents' charges that the Empire State Development Corporation broke the law when it added shops, restaurants, a hotel and

1,210 condos to an existing plan for a public park stretching 1.3 miles along the waterfront from the Manhattan Bridge to the foot of Atlantic Avenue.

The state says it needs private development to generate \$15 million annually to pay for upkeep of the development's 77-acres of open space, basketball courts, fields and public beaches.

Knipel ruled that the revenue-generating buildings don't violate laws that prohibit private development on parkland because that part of the once-industrial Brooklyn waterfront had "never been parkland."

The ruling was not unexpected. At a pre-trial hearing in August Knipel had questioned the legal merits of the suit. "I can see policy reasons for not putting these buildings next to a park. But why legally?" he asked.

In Tuesday's decision, Knipel also dismissed the claim that the state's plan didn't take "a hard

look" at the impact that new residential development would have on existing traffic and infrastructure in the area.

State and city planners said construction would begin in January.

"Once completed, Brooklyn Bridge Park will be for the 21st century what Prospect Park was to Brooklyn in the 19th century and Marine Park was in the 20th century," said Adrian Benepe, the city's Parks Commissioner.

Judi Francis, one of several plaintiffs, said she knew all along that this fight would go the distance.

"As we have said from the beginning, the critical fight is in the appellate division [whose courthouse is] a few blocks away from this site — the so-called 'park,'" she said.

—Ariella Cohen

Heath and Michelle to wed!

The Brooklyn Papers

Heath Ledger and Michelle Williams, the king and queen of Brooklyn's increasingly crowded celebrity prom, are reportedly tying the knot.

The Boerum Hill townies were spotted this week at Brooklyn's marriage bureau, where the longtime companions picked up a license to wed, according to Page Six.

Ledger's publicist would not confirm what's going on with the engaged "Brokeback Mountain" co-stars, but a local source who knows the couple said that the two were about to take baby Matilda with them on a trip to visit family in London and Australia.

When our insider was asked if the trip was a honeymoon, the source denied. The couple has been engaged since August.

Getting nothing from official channels, The Brooklyn Papers visited the clerk's office in room 205 in the Municipal Building, the drab of-



Heath Ledger and Michelle Williams in "Brokeback Mountain."

face where generations of Brooklynites have schlepped to get their marriage licenses. But our fact-finding mission only yielded more questions. One worker, clearly suffering from a Brooklyn inferiority complex, couldn't even believe the Post's report that

the uber-couple would design to visit their place of work. "All the actors go to One Centre Street [where the Manhattan clerk's office is located] — it's more discreet," she said, as she stood among anxious spouses-to-be filling out marriage affidavits.

One thing's for sure. If Williams and Ledger did get their marriage license, the stars have just 60 days to wed in New York State. That's not just the law, by the way, but the length of the average Hollywood marriage. —Rubinstein

Moose call

Oddo takes swing at Mussina

For The Brooklyn Papers

A Met-loving City Councilman who hopes to ban the use of metal bats in high school baseball is starting down a new opponent: New York Yankees pitcher Mike Mussina.

Last week, Mussina, who faces only wood bats in the Major Leagues, slammed Councilman James Oddo (R-Bay Ridge) for claiming that metal bats are more likely to cause serious injuries.

"I can unequivocally state that non-wood bats are no more dangerous than their wooden counterparts," said Mussina, a board member of Little League Baseball.

But Oddo swung back, calling Mussina's brush-back pitch "disheartening at best and repulsive at worst."

He and others also pointed out that Mussina's statement was released by Easton Sports, a metal bat manufacturer. But Oddo, whose beloved Mets got further in this year's playoffs than the so-called Bronx Bombers, didn't stop there.

"It would seem that the only thing Mike Mussina knows about bats is that lately he has had a hard time avoiding those in the hands of Major League hitters," said Oddo.

The Oddo bill is still in committee, though he is optimistic of its chances.

The bill has 36 co-sponsors — but must contend with an all-star lineup of metal bat fans, from amateur league players to manufacturers themselves.

Metal bat enthusiasts say their fake lumber is more durable and has a bigger sweet spot than their wooden counterparts. Yet they're just as safe, thanks to new manufacturing guidelines demanded by college and high school baseball governing bodies.

"Aluminum and wood bats are now on equal footing," said Richie Christie, director of Protect our Nation's Youth, a baseball league.

But Oddo isn't buying that crackjack.

"We don't believe in testing them by comparing wood bats to metal bats is fair or right," said Oddo's spokesman Chris DeCicco. "They're not comparing apples to apples, and we believe that the data is flawed."

DeCicco also challenged Mussina to prove his assertions that balls hit off metal bats have a speed equivalent to balls smacked with wooden bats.

"Mike Mussina is wrong, and we can show him how he's wrong," said DeCicco.

It sounds it's time for Jimmy Oddo to take some BP against the Yankee rigity. —Christie Risk

March for Flatbush Ave traffix

Traffic hot spots



Red dots mark intersections with unmitigated significant impacts on game days if Atlantic Yards (blue area) is fully built out. Source: Empire State Development Corporation

The Brooklyn Papers

While thousands of Brooklynites took advantage of the day after Thanksgiving to shop, more than a dozen Atlantic Yards protesters used "Black Friday" to highlight the gridlock that even supporters of the project say cannot be remedied.

Holding signs like "Tell the city and the state to FIX THE TRAFFIC FIRST!" and "Atlantic Yards gridlock solution: Add more cars," the protesters marched back and forth — crossing at the green, not in between — across the bottle intersection of Atlantic and Flatbush avenues.

State officials who support the 16-tower residential and arena development have admitted that 13 intersections around the project would remain clogged on days when there are events at the arena (see map).

Jim Vogel of the Council of Brooklyn Neighborhoods, said his "Merry Gridlock" protesters would return to the intersection several times before the Christmas shopping season is done.

—Gersh Kuntzman



Atlantic Yards opponents rallied near the site of Bruce Ratner's proposed mega-development last week, complaining of traffic that Atlantic Yards would cause.

'Tis the season to light up

Trees, houses, menorahs brighten the holiday spirit

By **Christie Rizk**
for The Brooklyn Papers

If you've turned on a radio lately, you know that Christmas is coming. But starting this week, your cars won't be the only organs reminding you of the upcoming holiday.

Tree lighting ceremonies have already started all over the borough, from one MC'd on Thursday by noted non-Christmas celebrant, City Councilman David Yassky (D-Park Slope) to the tree-lighting event hosted the next night by state Sen. Marty Golden (R-Bay Ridge).

And, to keep Christmas from taking over the one true Festival

of Lights, Rabbi Simcha Weinstein of Brooklyn Heights' Congregation B'nai Avraham will oversee the lighting of Brooklyn's "official" menorah in front of Borough Hall for eight nights starting Dec. 1.

Borough President Markowitz—who attends so many ceremonial lightings that he practically needs fireproof gloves—will be on hand.

Markowitz's attendance is no accident. Last year, as reported in The Brooklyn Papers, a battle for menorah supremacy broke out between Weinstein's "official" menorah, and a Park Slope celebration touted as the borough's "truest."

But this year, the issue has apparently been resolved.

"We're the official menorah," said Weinstein (details below). "We're the menorah that Marty Markowitz uses in official photos."

The seasonal bulbcratic began on Thursday with the Atlantic Avenue Local Development Corporation's tree-lighting ceremony at the Belarusian church at Atlantic Avenue and Bond Street.

Golden threw the switch on a series of tree-lightings on Friday in McKinley Park. His next ceremonies are Dec. 4 and 6 (see below).

And in a twist on the traditional holiday lighting ceremonies, the

Brooklyn Bridge Park Conservancy is hosting a series of lighting installations by local artists, which will be on view from Dec. 5 until Jan. 7.

City councilmen, parks conservancy groups and fat men in red velvet suits aren't the only ones who can screw in a light bulb.

The trail of lights continues into Dyker Heights where you can walk into a wastage wonderland, thanks to the Polizzotto and Spata families, two 84th Street clans that became famous throughout the area for setting up elaborate Christmas displays (details below).

Past displays have included 29-foot-high toy soldiers, whole animatronic villages and the entire cast of

characters from the "Nutcracker."

"It's really something to see," said Josephine Beckmann, district manager of Community Board 10.

Tree-lighting ceremonies, Dec. 4, 5:30 pm, Lady Mosby Square Park (corner of Avenue U and Van Sicken Street); Dec. 6, 6 pm, Fort Hamilton Memorial Triangle (Fourth Avenue at 25th Street). For information call (718) 238-6044. The "official" menorah lighting, nightly, Dec. 15-22, in the plaza in front of Borough Hall and state Supreme Court. Call (718) 866-6815 for times. Brooklyn Bridge Park Conservancy light installation, Dec. 5, 6 pm, foot of Main Street. Call (718) 602-0661 for information. Polizzotto and Spata family displays, 84th Street, between 11th and 12th avenues. Do not call. They have enough tourists to deal with.



As always, Dyker Heights will be home to some of Brooklyn's most decorated houses, like this one last year.

RACCOONS...

Continued from page 1

The city's seeming indifference to raccoon-inspired fear is a hard pill to swallow for people like Mary Pantaleo, a Bay Ridgeite who has two raccoons squatting in her back yard and was one of many borough residents who called The Brooklyn Papers after our front-page expose last week on the invasion of the masked bandits.

"They made a nest between my porch and my neighbor's fence with plastic bags," said Pantaleo. "One night I was in my backyard, and I see this raccoon just sitting in my lounge chair scratching itself."

"Another night, two raccoons started mating on top of my Jacuzzi cover. I was petrified!"

Pantaleo is desperate to evict the two bushy-tailed critters, and her fear is not surprising, given the average Brooklynite's lack of exposure to raccoons.

Gentles, the state Department of Environmental Conservation, and the City's Health Department could not offer any answers as to why Brooklynites are spotting more raccoons. In fact, the agencies and Gentles contend that they haven't noticed an increase in complaints about the animals.

But Bob Zink, who runs the Staten Island-based Wildlife Rehabilitation and Education Center and routinely works with the Center for Animal Care and Control, thinks the explanation is overdevelopment.

"When you displace their habitat, they have nowhere to go," said Zink. But fortunately for the raccoons, not everyone wants them to get outta here.

Angela Fagan, a Borough Park resident, spotted raccoons taking a dip in her kids' baby pool in September, and she was smitten.

"I love seeing things like that," she said. "And, I wouldn't mind seeing them again."

Whether or not Fagan does see them again depends largely on luck—it's a tough life out there in the concrete jungle.

Zink routinely cares for orphans whose mothers have been hit by cars. He says poisoning is also a common phenomenon, although he warns it's illegal.

Even the city bureaucracy poses a danger.

Gentles said that all raccoons trapped by the agency in Staten Island, the Bronx or Queens get euthanized as a precaution (all three boroughs have seen some rabies cases in the past year).

In Manhattan and Brooklyn, trapped raccoons get turned over to rehabilitators, who care for them until they are ready to be released into the wild.

Given the perils of city life, Zink never releases his caught raccoons back into the boroughs.

"That's like signing their death warrant," he said. "I release them upstate."

Zink recommended less-dramatic measures to deter the critters, including using screw-top garbage cans, which raccoons, despite their famously useful thumbs, can't open.

In a final plea for his beloved raccoons, Zink added that they've been here longer than we have.

"They've traveled these lands for thousands of years, and they have a right to live on the land," said Zink. "They don't know about property rights. We have to learn to live with the wildlife."

SQUIRREL...

Continued from page 1

Of things—and many others weighed in against the squirrel-huggers.

Only in Park Slope could a person see a beloved local mascot—then find herself tarred and feathered for interrupting the circle of life. Sure, she violated the Prime Directive, but so did Captain Kirk—and everyone loved him!

But the woman who saved Al the Albino didn't shy away from a fight: "I was the parent throwing things at the hawk," said the woman, who identified herself by her non de guerre, Suzanne.

Bowing to the neighborhood's non-violent creed, she quickly added that she fired just "one small twig that never made it anywhere near [the hawk]." But then, her defiance continued: "I did not want to see that lovely and unusual squirrel swooped away. So many enjoy seeing the squirrel, including children, but we would not give a grey squirrel a second look. The hawk was certainly amazing, but looked stupid and not in need of snacking on this particular squirrel."

The audacity! The anti-Darwinism! The illegality!

Park Slope is not only a neighborhood of peace-lovers, but also one filled with lawyers. One lawyer pointed out that "harassing red-tailed hawks is forbidden under the migratory bird treaty."

Another person added that Parks Department rules state that no person shall "molest, chase, wound, punt, hunt, shoot, throw missiles at... any animal." That missive was signed, "Geoff, who thinks the squirrels are cute, but also enjoys seeing the red-tailed hawks do what they do best (catching squirrels)."

Still, Suzanne defended her turf: "My twig toss was meant only to distract, not to harm or harass," she said, signing off by referring to the hottest of the hot buttons in Park Slope: last winter's "Toy's hat" discussion.

"I hope we can end this here and go back to discussing the gender of hats," she said.

I wasn't ready, See, I hadn't spotted this Moby Dick of squirrels yet, so the other day, I went in search of the elusive beast.

Turns out, he wasn't elusive at all.

"Oh, I see him every day," said a Parks Department worker in the Ninth Street playground. She pivoted on her heel, peered into the underbrush for less than 10 seconds, and announced: "There he is!"

And, indeed, there was—bright white and standing out against the dead brown leaves like a bull's-eye at a rifle range. White-brown and black squirrels skittered about safely in their camouflage, but the Great White Squirrel practically had a sign on his back reading, "Eat me."

So enjoy your albino mascot while you can, Park Slope. There aren't enough twig-throwers to keep this guy safe from becoming a hawk's in-flight meal sometime soon.

For the record...

A front-page article ("Masked bandits," Nov. 25) correctly stated that raccoons are "bear cousins," but later wrongly suggested that raccoons are rodents. They are actually mammals in the order carnivora. The Brooklyn Papers regrets the error and apologizes to rodents and carnivora everywhere.

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Grass menagerie

Papers, players test Cadman's plastic field

By Dana Rubinstein
 The Brooklyn Papers

The controversial carpet of plastic grass is finally in place at Cadman Plaza Park. Let the games begin (and the squabbling continue!).

Ever since the Parks Department's plans for an artificial turf field became public last year, Downtown Brooklyn has been divided between pro-rubber and pro-natural-grass parties.

The real grass fans, including some veterans who objected to plastic grass being installed on the lawn in front of the borough's Korean War memorial, said only a natural turf field was appropriate in a neighborhood so devoid of nature.

But supporters of artificial turf, including the Parks Department, celebrated its durability and economy over the long term.

To once and for all put an end to the grass war, the Brooklyn Papers secured an exclusive visit to the new artificial grass turf at Cadman Plaza Park this week.

On Tuesday afternoon, two Papers reporters were escorted into the park at Tillary Street and Cadman Plaza West, where Parks Department workers were busy completing a \$2.9-million reconstruction of the weathered public space, including the laying down of fake turf in the southern half of the park.

For a second opinion, the Papers brought along two members of the St. Francis College soccer team, and coach Carlo Acquista.

"This is better than a grass field," said Javier Gonzalez, 18, who is also a member of the Venezuela national team.

His St. Francis teammate, Anthony Matos, an all-con-



The Brooklyn Papers' Julia Rosenberg



Parks Department

Cadman Plaza Park after and before its resurfacing with synthetic grass.

ence player, claimed that fewer sports injuries take place on fake grass.

It would be hard to mistake artificial grass for the true blue, green, variety, but the rubber particle turf was relatively soft to the touch, resembling the sort of hard blades that grow on sand dunes.

Judy Stanton, head of the Brooklyn Heights Association and long-time supporter of the plan to replace the Cadman Plaza dustbowl with plastic grass, was also optimistic.

"Just to see green there is a welcome sight, even if it isn't real," said Stanton.

"Cadman is a de facto playing field, so I'm hoping that

there'll be enough natural greenery on the other side of the war memorial for those who don't want to be anywhere the plastic."

The park is expected to be open by March. Its plastic surface, which purists deride, is the same as artificial fields at the heavily used Inland Grasslands.

The Parks Department is moving towards wider use of fake grass, which is more durable. Indeed, during light rainfalls, the grass fields at the Parade Grounds are closed, while play continues on the fake-grass field.

No 'thanks' to Brooklyn

The Brooklyn Papers

The state officials pushing Atlantic Yards forward weren't giving thanks to Brooklyn this Thanksgiving.

Rushing to gain approval for Bruce Ratner's mega-development before Gov. Paterson leaves office, a maul of Empire State Development Corporation staffers spent their holiday weekend working overtime to put in public comments that had been left out of the project's final environmental impact statement.

One hundred and forty-eight public comments had been excluded — in violation of state-by-laws — from the state's documentation of the traffic, pollution, gentrification and "unmitigable impacts" that will be caused by Ratner's 16-tower, residential, hotel, office space and arena project.

But visions of sugarcorns on their Thanksgiving tables had the ESDC minions quickly digesting gentrification pie charts and traffic-congestion diagrams. In just seven days, the secretive agency managed to retract, reissue and reworked the 4,500-page, single-spaced document.

"Once we saw the mistakes, we worked hard to get the necessary work done as fast as possible," said Jessica Copen, spokeswoman for the agency.

As reported in The Brooklyn Papers, The Thanksgiving weekend work was set into motion after Raul Rothblatt called the agency to tell them his testimony was not included in the just-certified impact statement.

The testimonies were "inadvertently excluded" said Empire State Development Corporation Chairman Charles Gargano.

Now that its workers' hard work is done, the ESDC said it would meet on Dec. 8, when the agency is expected to approve Atlantic Yards. After that, the project goes to the state's Public Authorities Control Board, the three-man panel whose unanimous approval is the last hurdle in the public-review process that Ratner must leap.

All three board members — Gov. Paterson, Senate Majority Leader Joe Bruno (R-Brooklyn) and Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver (D-Manhattan) — have said they favor the project. — **Arrielle Cohen**

RATNER...

Continued from page 1

berg, Deputy Mayor Dan Doctoroff. Ratner, Forest City Ratner executives, Ratner's college buddy, Gov. Paterson, and the state economic development officials who are shepherding the project.

With time running short, Matthew Brinkerhoff, the lawyer representing lead plaintiff and Develop Don't Destroy Brooklyn spokesman Daniel Goldstein, called on the judges to expedite his request for access to the documents.

"It's profoundly disturbing that public officials are resisting [public access] to information about a public project," he said.

Calling his case a "fishing expedition" is the state's way of claiming there is no evidence of wrongdoing, he added.

"But [we know] there is a mountain of evidence that this process has been and continues to be unconstitutional," is the state's way of claiming there is no evidence of wrongdoing, he added.

Any delay would extend the approval process into the administration of Eliot Spitzer, who supports the project, though not as voraciously as Paterson.

"If they discover something wrong or truly embarrassing, the political climate could be changed at a key moment," said David Reiss, a Brooklyn Law School, who did not pick the term "fishing expedition" was apt.

"They are looking for potentially important disclosures or some kind of smoking gun. The defendants are trying to prevent that from happening."



The Falconer

Edie Falco, star of HBO's "The Sopranos" takes a stroll down Seventh Avenue in Park Slope during a break from filming an episode on Tuesday.

RETAKE...

Continued from page 5

Properties. "And they were sick of \$40 cab rides."

It's not only the young who are moving back to Manhattan. Brooklyn broker Roslyn Huebner said some of the Brooklyn residents she sees moving back to Manhattan are in their 60s.

"The empty nesters want to grow old in Manhattan," she said. "The sell their bigger co-ops for a one-bedroom on the Upper West Side, where they can be in the heart of everything, footloose and fancy free."

Brokers at every level are sensing the change.

Aaron Ross, a broker at Charlie Properties, was not surprised when his Craigslist posting for a newly renovated \$1,150 studio on the Lower East Side was bombarded with bites from Brooklynites.

Ross ultimately rented the studio to someone moving from elsewhere in Manhattan, but he said he has overheard plenty of anti-Brooklyn gripes about the train to Williamsburg.

"Everyday the L train is packed with people who would rather be in Manhattan," he said.



Laila Gheith is back on the Upper East Side after bailing on Billyburg.

Greenberg was one of them. She absorbed a \$300 increase in her monthly rent just as she'd never have to ride under the East River again.

"The L broke down constantly," she said from her new apartment on East Ninth Street and Avenue C. "So I would often get stuck in Brooklyn."

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The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Asian Longhorned Beetle Cooperative Eradication Program reports that moving firewood can spread tree-killing invasive diseases and insect pests like the Asian longhorned beetle (ALB). Already, the ALB is responsible for the loss of more than 32,000 trees in New York, New Jersey, and Illinois.

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In New York, call 1-877-STOP-ALB or 1-866-265-0301.

In New Jersey, call 1-732-815-4700. For more information, visit <http://www.aphis.usda.gov> and click on the Asian Longhorned Beetle under "Hot Issues."

The Asian Longhorned Beetle Cooperative Eradication Program is comprised of the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service and Forest Service, joined in New York by the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, and the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation. The USDA agencies are joined in New Jersey by the New Jersey Department of Agriculture, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, and the City of Linden.



Brooklyn Papers

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continued from back page

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